

# THE CINDERELLA MAN



EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER





dp  
75

















*"A Cinderella-man!" she murmured. "But He is Not Here"*

# THE CINDERELLA MAN

A ROMANCE OF YOUTH

BY  
HELEN K. CARPENTER  
AND  
EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER



New York  
THE H. K. FLY COMPANY  
Publishers

Copyright, 1916, by  
The H. K. Fly Company.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE DREAMER AWAKENED.....	9
II MEMORIES IN AN OLD GARDEN....	19
III A LODGING FOR A POET.....	25
IV THE HEROINE ENTERS.....	31
V SUNLIGHT AND THEN A SHADOW..	44
VI TWO POINTS OF VIEW.....	52
VII A LITTLE GIRL IN A BIG, STRANGE HOUSE .....	62
VIII WILL AGAINST WILL .....	73
IX SOMEHOW, THE RING DID NOT FIT HER FINGER .....	83
X THE SPELL OF THE SONG.....	94
XI THE LIGHT FROM A DORMER WIN- DOW .....	103
XII HE WROTE THINGS UNDER THE ROOF .....	117
XIII AN EMISSARY FROM A PRINCESS....	130
XIV A BANK BALANCE .....	143

CHAPTER		PAGE
XV	A CHRISTMAS FAIRY .....	152
XVI	THE VIOLET ROSETTE .....	164
XVII	THE FAIRY SERVES TEA.....	175
XVIII	HIS NEW SECRETARY .....	186
XIX	A FEW CHANGES .....	195
XX	ROMNEY ISSUES A DICTUM.....	204
XXI	A GENIUS AT FAULT.....	212
XXII	MAINLY TEMPERAMENTAL .....	224
XXIII	A LOVE PASSAGE IMPROVED.....	235
XXIV	PRIMROSE AS CUPID .....	244
XXV	"THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS".....	253
XXVI	A SHATTERED PARADISE .....	261
XXVII	LOVE SEEKS THE WAY .....	267
XXVIII	MORRIS CANER HEARS A CONFES- SION .....	278
XXIX	THE THRESHOLD OF ROMANCE....	285
XXX	ON COMMON GROUND .....	293
XXXI	THE TURNING POINT .....	300
XXXII	THE PRINCESS .....	304

## ILLUSTRATIONS

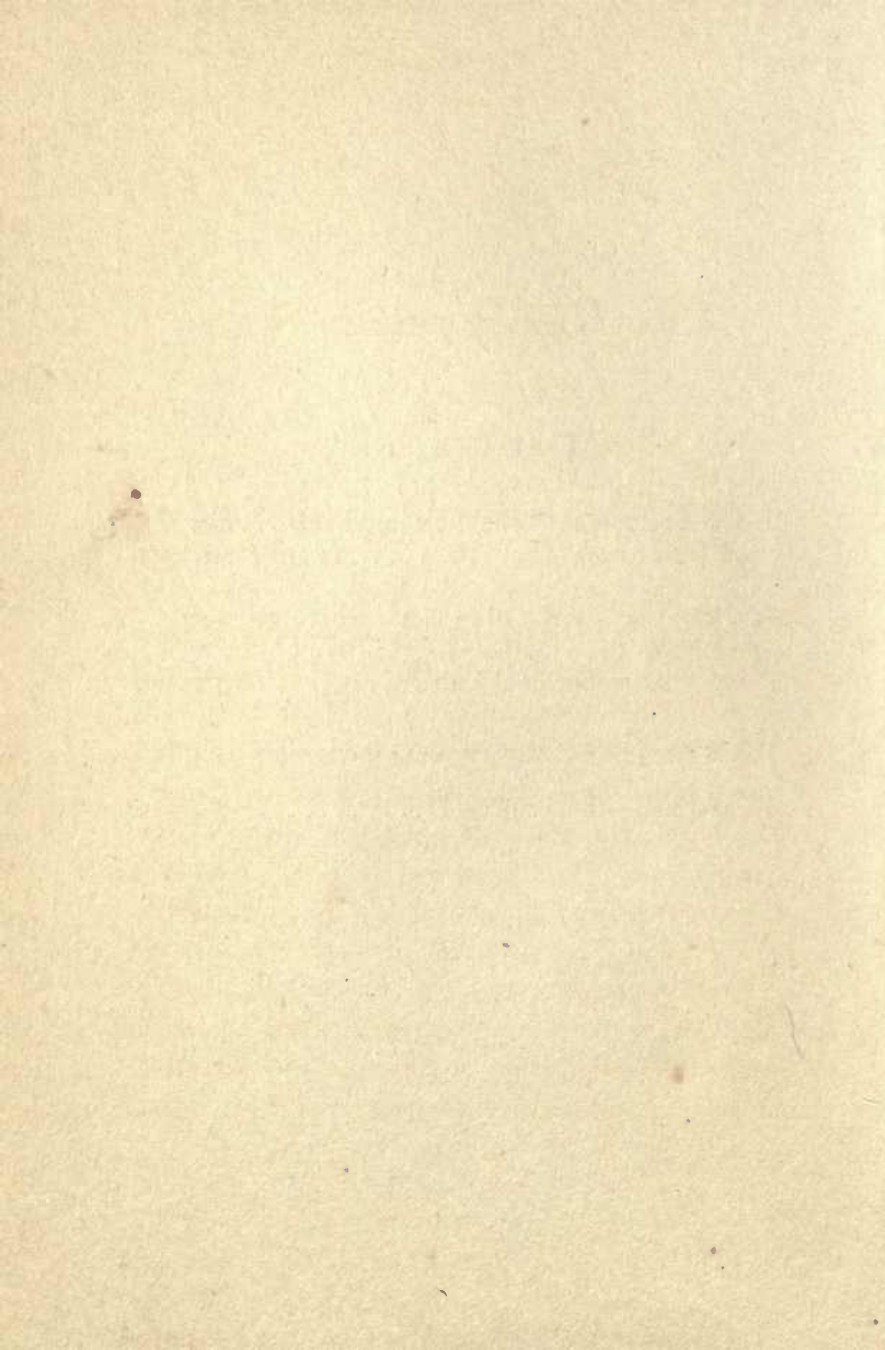
"A Cinderella-man!" she murmured softly. "But  
he is not here" . . . . . Frontispiece

"Well, in that shabby old place—where you see  
the light, lives Quintard. He lives up there,  
like Cinderella, in the attic" . . . . . Page 109

"Good-by, Cinderella-man" . . . . . " 194

"Please, ask—the Princess!" . . . . . " 310





# The Cinderella Man

## CHAPTER I.

### THE DREAMER AWAKENED.

**G**ENTLE mysteries dwelt among the old and beautiful things which companioned Anthony Quintard through the long nights when the frost's delicate embroideries edged the window panes and the falling snow tapped wraithily at the casement. Many a time he said, "Come in," picturing with boyish fancy a friendly phantom come to visit the others, who, when the firelight reached out to embrace them, retreated into the shy shadows of the panelled wall. He always had the feeling that they were there—those ghosts of sovereign thoughts, those shades of golden words, those spirits of beneficent deeds—for, in a hundred years and more, only the gentlest of lovely women, the noblest of gentle gentlemen, had thought and spoken and done for one another and their neighbors there. So you may

understand that Tony, one of the most gentle of all that house, left alone with that beautiful heritage of old things and older spirits, must have loved and venerated them everyone.

Outside, the city—its towering hives crowding, almost crushing the ancient dwelling where Tony lived with all the yesterdays—called, like a vendor of toys, offering the dazzling playthings of the night to him; but, for one whose blood was warm with youth, his heart was cold to that vibrant lure without. It always seemed to him that there was more for heart and mind within those venerable walls. So he did not join that motley pageant of humanity at play. He found companions in those peopled books, friends who were forever amiable and young; there were songs for him in the silent spinet; there were light and shadow dances on the hearth; magic in the weave of the rugs at his feet; and drama in the conflict of the quiet place itself against the noisy bluster of encroaching years.

The new and tawdry brawled without, the old and beautiful reposed within. There was nothing there that was not older than Tony,—nothing there that was not as harmonious as the chords that he sometimes ventured to rouse from that sleeping instrument. To touch it, to pick up a book, to sit at the



great carved table, to gaze at the mellowed portraits, or to sink back into the embracing arms of his grandsire's chair, was to visualize companions who charmed him with their gentle courtesy, engaged him with their soft voices, counselled him with their sturdy advice, and entertained him with their friendly wit.

There, before the fire—in that same grandsire's chair—with the *samovar* simmering at his elbow and the light from a lamp falling upon the penciled verses now taking form after a long vigil—his friend, Romney Evans, attorney-at-law, and over twice his years, found him on a winter's night.

Tony had no reason to expect him, yet in some clairvoyant fashion the youth seemed to know that it was Romney's hand that knocked. That night—between the coinage of rhymes—his thoughts had turned to the oldest friend in his memory, although he had not seen or heard from the lawyer in months. Perhaps it was that ancient *samovar*, Romney's remembrance on the occasion of Tony's eighteenth birthday, and which he had not lighted that winter; or it may have been Montaigne, for some lines he had read on friendship, earlier in the evening, made him think of his oldest intimate.

The philosopher's words were: "If a man should

importune me to give reason why I loved him, I find it could not otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: because it was he, because it was I."

It was that way with Tony and Romney. Moreover, the past bound them together as only the past can—a past of tender memories. Romney had been his father's dearest friend; and when the father was summoned by the Great Usher of Eternity, Romney had been his mother's closest councilor.

It was during his lifetime that Tony came to look upon the lawyer as one of his own and most cherished possessions. He considered Romney as a thoroughly grown-up brother, though the latter was old enough to have been his father. Tony shared with him all those manly interests which a boy so ardently harbors, and which he considers beyond the ken of even the dearest of mothers.

This friendly intercourse with Romney had a great influence upon Tony's character. Luckily it was a sound influence, counteracting to a happy degree the super-sensitiveness the lad had inherited from his mother. They apparently grew up together—man and boy. Pals they were—with no distinction, save in years, which their sympathies leveled.

So on that winter's night, Tony knew his old friend's knock upon the library door.

"Enter, old top!" he cried joyously. And as Romney appeared upon the threshold, Tony held out a slender but capable hand, and grasped the other's warmly.

Romney responded to this enthusiastic greeting in his old, quiet, humorous fashion, looking at Tony through a pair of blue eyes, in which one might have seen a flicker of anxiety. In the dim light the young man missed this tell-tale signal, but he did not fail to note that the usually smooth and glossy head of grey hair bore rather the marks of fingers' trowsled combing than the orderly toilet of a brush.

"What's wrong?" asked Tony, as he relieved Romney of his great coat and drew up a chair for him by the fire.

"Be so good as to sit down yourself," insisted the lawyer. "I want to look at you for a while"—he smiled—"and then I'll tell you how I came to crunch the snow on your doorsill to-night."

Tony, though ever impatient, knew better than to oppose him, so he obeyed, sitting, as it seemed to him, at the feet of that tall, soldierly figure standing on the hearth rug.

"You haven't changed much in the last few months," began Romney, after a moment's silence.



"No," grinned Tony. "I won't be twenty-five until April!"

"I didn't mean that!" He pointed to the manuscript of verses which the young man had dropped upon the table. "I meant as to your convictions. Still writing verses!"

Tony nodded. "And selling them—every now and then. If this keeps up I shall be able to get out a volume of poems in the autumn. And then," he went on enthusiastically, "I'm going to try my hand at writing the book of an opera—something light, you know, but with sense as well as rhythm in it—a real plot—oriental—Arabian Nights' atmosphere. I've got a bully idea!"

"That's interesting, but not practical just now! The fact is, you've got to contrive in some way to substantially increase your income. I had a talk with your Uncle Peter this afternoon, and he——"

"Uncle Peter!" groaned Tony.

His Uncle Peter, it may be remarked, was the only other Quintard of Tony's family, but beyond the name, he in no wise resembled any Quintard that the lad had ever met. Uncle Peter was a bullet-headed, commercial-minded, non-sentimentalist. He had in a thoroughly business-like, but unbrotherly fashion, possessed himself of the old Quintard man-



sion in which he had suffered Tony to live after the death of the lad's mother, pending the time when the property might most profitably be sold as the site for a skyscraper. But as the years had passed, with never a word of warning, Tony had lived on there with a perfect feeling of security. He was rooted in the soil of the old garden outside the window. He had the illusion that it was his, just as were the two old servants who kept it for him; and the income which came to him regularly through Romney's hands.

"Well, what about Uncle Peter?" asked Tony. He knew it was something unpleasant.

Romney drew up a chair. "You know he owns this house?" Yes, Tony vaguely remembered that, but what of it?

"Knowing that, you must be aware that some day your Uncle Peter will sell it!"

Tony felt a sinking sensation somewhere in the region of his solar plexus. A look at Romney's solemn face confirmed his worst fears. "He has sold—I know it!"

"Yes! I'm as broken up about it as you are—almost! I know how you feel, but you must buck up. You're very young—old things have to go—you've got your own house to build—I mean your

life's house; and you can't lose any time in setting to work!" Romney laid his hand on Tony's arm to assure him anew that he was standing by his old pal.

Tony nodded, as he bit his lip, and clenched his hands. Finally he spoke: "Is that all?"

"Not quite," answered Romney, slowly. "You may not remember, but your mother's income, which became yours with her death, was the revenue derived from a contract, which your father made with your Uncle Peter twenty-five years ago when they were partners. That contract has expired, and with its expiration, your income ceases. You understand that."

Yes, Tony could understand that enough to know its significance; but that was a small matter. It was the sale of the old house which concerned him. "What are they going to do with it?"

"I suppose they'll tear it down and put up a twenty-story office building."

"When must I clear out?"

"This month!"

Tony looked about the room. "I wonder what I shall do with all these things?"

"Your Uncle will take care of them," returned Romney casually, rising to light a cigar.

"Oh, he will, will he," snapped Tony, belligerently. "What interest has he in the contents of this house?"

"They belong to him!"

Tony was stunned for a moment. He had always disliked his Uncle Peter. Now he loathed him with boyish intenseness. Why should his uncle come into possession of all these dear and intimate things, each holding some cherished significance? It was only a matter of money. He would buy them from his uncle. He told Romney so in an outburst of indignation.

"With what, my dear boy, will you buy them?"

Tony was crushed. He began to curse Uncle Peter. Romney stopped him. "Your Uncle Peter is a cold business proposition. No use wasting breath upon him. You have only to consider his proposal. Mind you, Tony, it isn't my idea. It is his. I merely promised to put it up to you."

"Whatever it is, I won't consider it for a second!" declared Tony, as he paced the room. "He's an unmitigated swine—I don't care if he is my father's brother—and you know what I thought of my father. I don't see how they possibly could have had the same mother."

"Then I won't bother you with this idea of his," said Romney.

"But what is it? I might as well know!" insisted Tony.

Romney smiled. "He offers you a position as clerk in the talcum powder factory!"

"Hah!" cried the young man, hysterically. "Talcum powder! Probably wants me to paste labels on those dreadful looking ten-cent cans! You can tell him for me that he and his whole darned factory can go to the devil!"

"I wouldn't tell him that," mollified Romney. "He might be induced to offer you a place with some of his other interests."

Tony sank down in a chair for a moment, thoughtfully. Presently he jumped up, and faced Romney squarely. "Romney, I've made up my mind. I'm going to stick to writing verses, and any other old thing that comes into my head. I'll make a living that way or bust; and you won't hear a whimper out of me. Let Uncle Peter pull this dear old house down over my head, and cart away every blessed object in it; but I won't ask him for a job—I won't take one from him—and if he offered me a penny, I'd fling it in his ugly face!"



## CHAPTER II.

### MEMORIES IN AN OLD GARDEN.

**T**ONY QUINTARD slept badly that night in the old four-poster, which had lulled him to sleep for many a year. As he rose fatigued, and looked out of the latticed window, his eyes feasted themselves, for the last time he knew, upon the old garden where he had spent so many happy hours.

As he stood there, he watched the shadow-line on the sundial slowly recording the advance of the day. The morning sun shot leaping fire into the frost-covered branches of the trees, turned the leaning arm of the ancient timepiece from dead copper into gleaming gold, the age-bitten stone into new life, and the gaunt Roman numerals, which time had battered grotesquely out of shape, were softened into comeliness, and became again as symmetrical as when graven by the artisan now three centuries dead.

It was the sentinel—that sundial—of the old Dutch garden, now fast asleep under the snow, and

the straw-bound coverings with which the old gardener had wrapped, against the frost, the most cherished plants. Only the ivy, wind-shaken free from snow, glistened green and entwined itself about the sundial, symbolizing for Tony the many memories which twined themselves for him about that rugged sentinel. That venerable object itself might have recalled that it had tolled off the hours, days, weeks, months and years of many a generation that lived and died beneath the lowering eyes of that old dwelling.

Across Tony's vision floated a small pattern of himself, lying at full length on the greensward in the springtime, with the pedestal of the dial for a pillow, "thinking songs," which was one of his favorite forms of play. These songs were full of birds and flowers and faries, and a little later filled with the images of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines, whose acquaintance he first made in Lamb's Tales. These in turn led him precociously to dip into the master poet's works themselves, and he came out with many a trick clinging to him.

Surely if Orlando could write verses on the bark of trees, Anthony Quintard at twelve could do as much. He smiled that sad morning, as he looked upon the garden and thought of the scoldings he had

got from the gardener for hacking away at that lordly maple, which still bore the scars of his boyish jingles. How full of purpose he was then to own a forest where he might hack away without molestation.

It was his mother who finally induced him to put his songs on paper tablets rather than on trees. It was much more practical, and easier. Furthermore, you could tear up the paper when the rhymes were not right and begin anew; but you couldn't tear up trees. It wasn't done.

He found more facility, too, with his pencil than with his pen-knife. So much so that some of his verses actually challenged the serious attention of his mother.

"Where did you get that pretty idea?" she had asked him.

"Oh," he had replied, "it just popped out of my head."

"*Out* of your head?" she smiled. "I thought ideas popped into one's head."

"No—no, dear mother," he had assured her. "My head is so, so full of them that they keep popping out all the time, and so fast that lots of them get away. My pencil is so slow, and the spelling so hard, that it is all I can do to catch one out of ten."

He remembered the sympathetic amusement with which his mother had listened to him, and then asked: "But they must get into your head before they can come out, must they not?"

"Oh, well," he had answered, "the fairies—the little people, you know—they are always hiding among the flowers and grass and if you lie down and keep very still and pretend you're asleep, you can feel them stuffing ideas into your head through your ears. That's what's going on when you see me pretending to be asleep at the sundial. That's why I lie so still in the grass."

It was no effort now for Tony to recreate that scene. Mother and son were sitting together under the trellis, then all a-plume with its fragrant wisteria flowering. He could see now just how that cameo face—all gentleness and winsomeness, an aristocratic face—lighted up as she smiled, and playfully said, "If your common sense would only develop in step with your fancy, I'd be quite sure of your future; but I'm afraid, my dear"—and she drew him close to her as she spoke—"that you are too much like your father!"

"Too much like father?" Tony had been surprised. He had believed that his mother shared with him the idea that his father was a paragon.



"Yes—too much like your father—to compete in that great market-place they call the world!"

"What's the matter with it?—why can't I—I compete with it?" Tony had inquired sturdily.

"Because it never quite appreciates men like your father."

"I'll make it appreciate me—you see if I don't!"

At that the mother leaned forward with sudden impulse and took her boy in her arms. "If you feel like that, and never let failure discourage you—never accept what you cannot repay—never lose faith in yourself—be firm without, but keep yourself gentle within—you will succeed, my dear. I only hope that I will be here to see you win!"

She had been spared to him, on through his college days—which he thought so unluckily separated them; but compensation came in the long vacations. Then Romney came to visit them. It was on the occasion of one of these visits that Romney found Mrs. Quintard ill—so ill that it alarmed him. She, too, felt that the time of her lingering here would be brief—that the doctors could do nothing for her. She told Romney then, that when she had gone, there was one trinket in particular that she wished him to put in Tony's hands. It was a gold locket, which her

mother had given her. She had replaced the old picture in it with a miniature of herself.

Not more than a month later, Tony had sat alone, his eyes blurred with tears, as he looked at the beloved face in the locket. The big house was still. The Great Adventure had called its chattelaine.

These were Tony's thoughts as he bade good-bye that morning to the old house and its garden—the shrine of his dearest memories.

## CHAPTER III.

### A LODGING FOR A POET.

**D**ISTRESSED over Tony's circumstances, knowing that all that the lad possessed was little more than a hundred dollars in bank, Romney importuned the boy to accept one or another position he had pried open for him. Fearful, at last, of hurting his old friend; fearful that insistence might make him yield against his will, Tony disappeared and purposely left no trail behind him.

Possessed of a determination of making his living by writing verse, or whatever else came to his hand, he resolved that he would keep going about the task in his own way, refusing the assistance that Romney only too gladly extended to him. Pride, ground deep into his uttermost consciousness, bade him stand or fall by himself. The little money he had would keep him for a while at least. It must. But there was need of the strictest economy. The hotel where he had spent the first week after leav-

ing the old house should no longer harbor him. He must seek humbler lodgings—he and his one trunk—and his manuscripts.

He found it—away down town, near Washington Square. On a corner stood one of those none-too-handsome mansions, designed in the 70's, a spacious edifice, the home of Morris T. Caner, who carried mines in his vest pocket and railroads dangling from his watch chain. The house was not big enough for Caner. He wanted to extend, to build an art gallery on the site of the older brown-stone dwelling next door, whose dingy front was the scandal of the street. But the owner of that dilapidated house got wind of the millionaire's desire and fixed an exorbitant price on his property. Caner refused to be robbed, as he put it, and the rookery's tenant, a shabby, towering woman who boasted of Southern respectability, remained to harass her lodgers for their rent.

Tony carried on negotiations with this creature to a successful issue. He occupied the attic, with a fine rear view over the roofs, and a prospect on one side of Caner's uppermost windows. He paid two dollars a week for this garret, and felt himself lucky at that, even though it was unfurnished. He wanted little. He bought himself, at a junk dealer's, a



second-hand Gloucester hammock for a bed. At another shop he acquired a well-worn kitchen table and a hideously upholstered but comfortable straight-backed chair, which had once been the feature of a suite; a washstand and the things that go with it. There was a shelf in one corner of his habitation. He hung a piece of calico therefrom and made himself a wardrobe. A soap box answered for a second chair in case he should ever have a visitor; and there was the trunk. He placed it against the railing, which balustraded the trap through which he made entrance and exit by way of a rickety pair of stairs to the hall below.

The attic was bitter cold. There was a register in the floor, but what heat originated in the cellar vanished utterly before it could ascend to that high altitude. Luckily he was well supplied with clothing. He worked in a fur overcoat, his feet in woolen stockings. And for service, he found the ready assistance of one Jerry Primrose, the factotem of the house, who, out of a wealth of experience, recognized in Tony Quintard a gently bred youth—the sort that he had delighted in caring for in days that were fairer than those now vouchsafed to him.

Primrose had been a well-trained servant and knew his place. Tony liked him at once, and the old man

soon came to look upon the lad with genuine affection. He was rather a picturesque figure in his way, with his shock of grey hair, surmounting a florid face, a shabby body which was supported by shuffling legs and somewhat uncertain feet. They were both in a way derelicts, the one at the beginning, the other at the end—or very close to the end of his tether.

Whenever he could spare a moment from his arduous labors below stairs, whenever he could escape from the argus eye of the landlady, whom Tony had dubbed "The Great She-Bear," Primrose would sneak up to the attic, and if he found Tony in an unproductive mood he would tidy up the room, accompanying these ministrations with a flow of humble philosophy and simple wit. And as time wore on he became as one closely knit with Tony's fortune, rejoicing with the lad when he sold a poem, consoling him when a verse was returned as "unavailable."

While Tony worked faithfully, he found the market for his wares a meagre one. Slowly the small bank account dwindled to nothing. Then it was that Primrose became the medium through which his fur overcoat, his watch, and other "luxuries" found their way to the pawnshop.

Many a time the old man, bewailing Tony's ill-luck with never a thought of his own, had suggested that the lad hunt up his old friend Romney Evans—of whom he had heard Tony often speak—and ask for assistance. But the young man was obdurate. He preferred to struggle along as best he could in his own way; and he was by no means unhappy. Possessed of a rich vein of humor, he had learned to laugh at his misfortune. Moreover, hope and faith in himself were strong within him, and he had learned to make a dollar go a long way.

In spite of Tony's avowed intention of making no call upon Romney, his faithful servitor could not get the lawyer out of his head. One day he said: "I ain't wishin' the gentleman no harm, sir; but ain't it possible that he might up an' croak an' leave you a bit of money?"

Tony laughed: "Don't build any such hopes. Mr. Evans is as hale and hearty at fifty as I am at twenty-five. Besides—why worry, my dear Primrose—we are doing very well as it is. The editor of 'The Ladies' Monthly Pest' has asked me to write a sonnet for the October number, and here it is April already."

"But you must remember, sir, he's one of them kind that don't pay nothin' till he prints your poem.

I'd like to see some ready money comin' into us."

"Money isn't everything," protested Tony.

"Ah, sir, it's only the rich as can afford to say that!"

Whereupon Tony laughed again. "I am rich," he declared. "I have your good company—at selected intervals—and I'm plugging away, without the least responsibility in the world, at the work I want to do. No man could ask more!"



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE HEROINE ENTERS.

**W**HILE Tony was thus working out his own destiny in his own way, Romney Evans, who had long since given up his fruitless search for the lad, was a frequent visitor at the great mansion next door. For years he had been the legal advisor of Morris Caner, not only in business but in domestic affairs. And as the millionaire's councilor, he had, some fifteen years before the date of this narrative, unconsciously begun to gather in his hands the threads of Caner's broken love-story, only to begin the weaving of them into Tony's own romance.

Caner had married after he had made his first fortune in coke—too late to be susceptible to the gentler, modifying influences of a sensitive woman. He was a born bachelor. He never should have married. He was selfish, strong-willed, and, as so many self-made men are, unyielding, and absolutely intent upon

having his own way in everything. When opposed, he became obstinate. Anyone who contested his will was obliged to yield or break with him.

His wife was a woman of real spirit. She endured his arrogance at first, hoping that her influence in time would at least make it possible for her to live with him; and still she hoped on, when a daughter was born to them, that the advent of a child in the house would bring out the better side of her husband's nature. But this event in no wise changed him.

For the sake of her daughter, Marjorie, Mrs. Caner suffered the millionaire's unreasoning bursts of temper until her own self-respect could no longer endure them. It was then that Romney was called in, and a separation arranged.

Their friends were not surprised, and though his intimates among men still clung to him, they did not fail to tell him what they thought of him. His physician, Doctor Thayer, came out bluntly and said to him:

"Morris, your millions have not improved you. You have been fighting for years to acquire wealth and power. Both are coming to you, yet you never give quarter in any contest—in the market or at home—even when you have, as you usually do, all the

advantage on your side. It has been the sort of warfare that takes the refinement out of a man."

"I know what I'm doing, and I don't ask even your advice," retorted Caner.

"You'll hear what I have to say, even though you never speak to me again," went on the physician. "Having thrust so many men down, when a little generosity on your part might have saved them, you have got rather in the habit of brutality. It's a habit that clings to you. I see it here in your own house. I don't wonder that Mrs. Caner is leaving you. Any woman of spirit would. You forget that in her home the woman should rule, not the man, no matter what sort of a king he may be in the business world. If you had one atom of real generosity in your nature——"

"Generosity!" thundered Caner. "What could be more generous than the provisions I'm making for my wife and child? They'll never want. They can go where they please, live as they please. It's settled."

And so it was. Mrs. Caner took Marjorie to France. At that time the child was five years old. Her mother in due time placed her in a convent school, whither she took the girl in the morning and called for her in the afternoon. They lived in a

charming apartment near Versailles, and as Marjorie grew up, her mother saw to it that the girl achieved all those accomplishments and attained all those graces so dear to womanhood. But, out of her own bitter experience, she kept Marjorie carefully sequestered from contact with young men. She told herself that the girl should never marry. That way lay unhappiness. And knowing only those carefully selected friends with which her mother surrounded her, Marjorie was dutifully content; but she could not escape that instinct for romance, the innate endowment of all women, nor some vicarious knowledge of what love meant, gathered from the girls she met at school and the conservatories, and such books as were bound to fall into her hands.

It was not until her nineteenth year that the opportunity came to her to know a young man in more than the most casual way. Mrs. Caner was in the habit of making trips to the various Continental resorts, but usually out of the season. Then, however, as she was not feeling well, and the winter in Paris a more than usually trying one, her doctor advised her to spend a month at Nice.

So they started—Mrs. Caner, Marjorie, and her maid and companion, Celeste Beauclair, who was as



respectable a she-dragon as ever watched over the vagaries of a girl.

They left Paris in the dark winter drizzle; they entered Nice in the sunlight at the height of the season.

In the eyes of the girl, who had never before seen that jewel of the Mediterranean, the city was an enchantment. From a distance indeed it looked to her like the top of a jeweled comb rising from out a sea of sapphire; and then as they drew nearer, it looked like a crescent-shaped garden filled with beds of geraniums. Closer still these plots resolved themselves into the red-tiled roofs of a smiling, glowing phalanx of villas and below them palm-shaded avenues spread like the ribs of a fan through the colorful ranks of shops and parks, dwellings and hosteleries, and dipped into the blue, iridescence of the Mediterranean.

In less than a half hour Marjorie sat down to her first meal in Nice, and about four o'clock that afternoon she strolled with her mother out on the promenade, which extends along the beach front.

In terrible contrast to the gay throng on the promenade was the riff-raff of the city sunning themselves on the stony beach below, like flotsam left there by a receding tide. Never had Marjorie seen

the upper and the under currents of humanity in such vivid contrast; never had she seen them regard each other with so much indifference; never had she seen them massed so closely and yet so far apart; never did the gay seem so gay, the wretched so wretched. It was though a silvery stream flowed side by side with an open sewer.

Thoughtfully they turned back toward the Jardin Publique, and, as they did this, they saw approaching through the throng a Mrs. Van Camp, a Parisian-American acquaintance of Mrs. Caner's. She was accompanied by a debonnaire young man of about thirty, straight of limb, good-looking, with dark brown eyes and a smart little mustache.

There was no avoiding Mrs. Van Camp. She all but embraced Mrs. Caner, patted Marjorie's hand affectionately, and presented the young man.

"Mr. Walter Nicolls, of New York!"

"How d' do—delighted to meet you," he bowed engagingly to Marjorie, and rattled on to her, while Mrs. Van Camp engaged her mother. "Quite jolly here, but one never meets anyone but foreigners. So you may imagine how happy I am to run across a girl from home."

Marjorie was interested. Anything American interested her. Her one great wish was to revisit her

native land. Her mother, though expatriated, still retained a feeling of genuine love for her country. She took particular pains to instruct Marjorie herself in the history of America. Indeed, she gave that her special attention. She regarded it as her sacred duty. So Marjorie was familiar with all the stirring events which had led to the final establishment of the picturesque nation to which she belonged, and the greatest hero to her in all the pages of history was George Washington. Moreover, she kept up with current events at home. American papers were sent to them. Both she and her mother read them regularly, with the avidity of exiles, and found more interest in them than in the English or Continental journals which came their way.

Thus, when Marjorie found herself for the moment *vis-a-vis* with one of her own countrymen, she began to quiz him in a quaint, straightforward, almost boyish fashion. At the same time there is no doubt but that the novelty of engaging in a conversation with a young man, and an attractive young man at that, added zest to the encounter. She found him responsive, full of small information, which is worth nothing in itself, and assumes only such value as is supplied by the person who furnishes it. But Walter Nicolls had an engaging manner, a real social gift.



He knew how to make himself agreeable. He knew little else of any importance in this world, but he thought rather well of himself, for he was well-born and should have inherited quite a fortune only his father had generously squandered it before him. This left Walter with a mere pittance, on which he found great difficulty in sustaining himself in the manner to which he had been born.

Without the least viciousness in his nature—only a lack of manliness—he had come to believe that the only solution of his difficulties would be to marry a rich girl. In this he had been encouraged from youth, and, but for a certain fastidiousness, he no doubt would have found a wife with a fortune long since. During the past year or so he had met more than one heiress, but, as he had remarked to Mrs. Van Camp, "I don't seem to suit those that suit me, and those that would have me, I wouldn't marry if they were hung with diamonds." So after all, he was not a thorough-going fortune-hunter.

However, he was immensely impressed with Marjorie—the more so, it may be added, when he learned from Mrs. Van Camp that the girl would doubtless come in for a large share of Morris Caner's millions. She told Walter the history of the family, the moment they had taken leave of mother and daugh-



ter, and at his solicitation Mrs. Van Camp agreed to do all that she could to further his acquaintance with Marjorie.

She drew the girl and her mother relentlessly into the small circle of her acquaintances at the resort, and not too often she managed to throw the young people together. She gave Walter an excellent character, and he himself gained the good-will of Mrs. Caner to such an extent that she at last made no objection to the friendly attentions he paid her daughter.

They played about Nice together like two children, more or less under the eye of the mother or the watchful Celeste. She even succumbed to his entreaties to visit the Casino, and there the three entered together one evening.

A stream of people, most of them in evening dress, were passing through the corridor, coming to the theatre at the far end of the building, and others no doubt intending to stop in the palm room where the band was playing. They, too, lingered there in the huge hall, set out with palms and small tables, parted with one broad aisle leading down the centre to the musicians' platform. The place was well filled with a gay, chattering crowd, mostly French, but scattered among them were a few English and a still lesser number of Americans.

Walter had secured cards of membership to the Circle International. He presented these cards at the foot of a pair of broad stairs to a liveried attendant, and mounting the flight they went through what seemed to be a reading room to a vast hall, chiefly furnished with tables about which sat and stood the most remarkable lot of people Marjorie had ever seen gathered in one place.

There the prettiest of French demi-mondaines rubbed elbows with the homeliest of respectable English women and a sprinkling of Russians; while the men, who were outnumbered almost ten to one, were of every sort—from the gesticulating Frenchman to the ponderous, good-natured American man of business who was seeing Europe and ready to lose money for the fun of the thing.

The place, in spite of all the people, was singularly quiet, oppressively, almost ominously quiet. The low-keyed hum which arose from the swarms around the tables, where butterflies were breaking their wings against the wheel, no more disturbed the stillness than does the drone of bees in a garden; but now and again above that hum broke the raven-like croak of the croupier with his monotonous, inevitable, "*Faites vos jeux, Messieurs. Marquez vos jeux!*"

Walter and his little party stood some time watching the play at a table over the shoulder of a stout, perspiring English princess in a black décolleté gown. It was all like a motion-picture—wordless, but graphic. Marjorie was fascinated. Walter explained the game to her, and her quick mind soon embraced its intricacies so that she followed gains and losses with ready understanding.

She was especially interested in watching a pale, shabbily dressed middle-aged woman who was steadily losing. At last the woman pushed back her chair from the table and rose unsteadily to her feet. The crowd made way for her. Marjorie followed her with a look, saw her pause uncertainly, raise her head and close her eyes in an effort to control a sob. It was perfectly plain to the girl—the tragedy was written big in the woman's face.

"Mother!" she exclaimed, impulsively. "Have you any money with you!"

"No, my dear; and if I had," she added with a smile, "I wouldn't let you play. This is all very interesting as a spectacle, but——"

"Oh, you don't understand. I don't want to—to gamble!" She turned to Walter. "That woman there—you saw her—she has lost every penny she has in the world—I *know* it!"

"Yes, yes—that may be, darling," said Mrs. Caner soothingly, "but someone always loses here!"

Walter had an inspiration. He took out his slender pocketbook and offered it to Marjorie. "I haven't very much with me, but you're welcome to it, Miss Caner!"

"You're a dear," exclaimed the girl, as she began to empty the pocketbook.

"Marjorie!" protested her mother sternly.

"I am borrowing"—she was counting the money—"ten five-franc notes from Mr. Nicolls. I shall pay him back directly we return to the hotel. Now, please, mother dear," she insisted, anticipating Mrs. Caner's forbidding expostulation, and ignoring a restraining hand, turned to the woman.

"I beg your pardon," began Marjorie in French, "but I saw that you—you were having very bad luck. And I—I thought that perhaps you couldn't exactly afford to—to lose so much."

The woman looked at her wonderingly. Marjorie went on: "I don't suppose you would ever care to play again—after what has happened—would you?"

"Play again?" The woman smiled bitterly. "Oh, I'm done for!" It was a bald statement of fact—not an appeal.

"Oh, no you're not—'done for'!" insisted Mar-



jorie. "Of course, I don't know anything about you, but I'm sure that just a little help—a small loan, you know—at this time, might carry you along until you could find something better to do than—than come here, where you haven't a fair chance."

The woman looked at her incredulously.

"So if you wouldn't mind," Marjorie went on, "I'd like to lend you these——" She held out the money, tightly rolled, and pressed it into the woman's hand. "You can pay it back to me—sometime, if you like. Please take it!"

Tears came into the woman's eyes. She grasped Marjorie's hand and kissed it.

"Come, my dear, we must be going!" Mrs. Caner took Marjorie gently by the arm, and under the pilotage of Walter, they left the woman standing there, looking after the girl with an expression of abject gratitude on her face and a benediction in her heart.

"She's a wonderfully fine generous girl," thought Walter as he led them down the stairway and out into the street, where the stars shone down big through the purple night.

## CHAPTER V.

### SUNLIGHT AND THEN A SHADOW.

**W**ALTER NICOLLS had established himself securely as a friend of the Caner's.

Although Mrs. Caner did not entirely approve of Marjorie's method of administering charity at the Casino Municipal, her own nature was too warm-hearted to reprove with an air of conviction her daughter's impulsive generosity. She scolded the girl mildly, and when Walter essayed to take the blame, Mrs. Caner promptly exonerated him and assured him that she liked what he had done. She also liked the considerate way he had of dancing attendance upon mother and daughter indiscriminatingly, and his simple and uncomplicated intelligence, his charming manners, won her so that she felt he was a man with whom she could trust her daughter. She came to the latter conclusion, however, only after a careful interrogation of Mrs. Van Camp and a subtle

questioning of Marjorie as to the general trend of her conversations with Walter.

Thus it happened that the two young people were permitted to see each other frequently. It was a new experience to Marjorie, to be on intimate terms with a jolly young man, who was never at a loss to find a means of entertaining her. Sentiment at first found no place in her calculations. Any thought of actually caring for Walter in a serious way never entered her head until on a certain afternoon they started out together to pay a call on a Russian family, the Nordofs, whom Mrs. Caner approved of, and who occupied one of the most picturesque villas about Nice.

Their cocher, a villainous looking old fellow in shabby green livery, drove them at an abominably slow gait along the quai overlooking the river, which separates the old town from the new. On the stones which margined the stream below them women were washing clothes in the primitive fashion of the great-grandmothers, and above them—on the boulevards opposite—a corps of municipal gardeners were trimming the trees. High above, spread out over the rising ground, gleamed villa upon villa, each in its blossoming garden; and beyond them the hills, covered with solemn olives and evergreen, among which

were plentifully and luxuriously scattered tropical fruit trees just beginning to flower, while still further away they could see great patches of yellow mimosa.

The hills looked as though someone had scattered confetti over a green carpet. Higher and further away still rose the maritime Alps—a misty pale blue, with sparkling white peaks, where the sun shone upon them.

At length they turned into a winding boulevard fringed with orange trees, and drew up at last before the Nordofs' amber-tinted villa whose garden was riotous with purple iris.

A French maid admitted them with the information that the family was out, but that she expected them to return at any moment. She urged the young people to wait in the cool drawing room.

They decided to do so. There was a piano in the room. Marjorie went to it instinctively and turned over the music on the open rack.

"Do you play?" asked Walter.

"My professor would never admit it," smiled Marjorie.

Walter laughed: "I'm not a professor. I don't know a thing about music—not a thing; but I like it if it's got a tune. It has an effect upon me.



Really, it has—especially when I dance to it.”

“You’d better tell me what kind of an effect it has before I begin,” said Marjorie, with a teasing smile.

“Oh, just an effect, you know—makes me jolly, or sad—oh, very sad—that is, when it’s sad.” Walter was never eloquent. He had a limited vocabulary, and slight powers of imagination. His very paucity of expression was a source of gentle amusement to Marjorie. It seemed to her, for all her lack of worldly experience, that here was one who really knew less than she did. Moreover, in spite of the fact that at times he was almost inarticulate, his sleepy way of speaking made up in humor what he missed in point of wit.

She laughed at him now, quite frankly, and he, out of his own simple conceit, laughed too; but as always he was quite confident that he was entertaining her.

“Perhaps,” he went on, “you sing things. I think that singing affects me even more than playing things—but, of course, you can’t dance to singing. That’s my only objection to it. I wonder if you could sing to me.”

“Oh, yes, I could sing to you, though I’ve never sung to anyone of importance before.”

"Well, it's time you began—if you don't mind," he said solemnly. "Sing any old thing—I should just like hearing your voice."

Marjorie made him a courtesy and, seating herself at the piano, began to sing in a clear, girlish soprano: "Oh, wert thou in the cold blast, I'd shelter thee." The old ballad was the first thing that had come into her hand and she instinctively sang with more than usual expression.

Walter sat in an easy chair where he could watch her bewitching profile and look out beyond her through the wide window over Nice and the Mediterranean. But before she had finished he was on his feet, standing close by the piano, fancying himself—and that required but little imagination—in love with her.

When she finished he held out his hand to her. She looked at him wonderingly and then placed her hand in his. It felt cool and strong. He pressed it.

"I—I never heard anyone sing—so—so—that is, with so much effect upon me. You know"—he still kept her hand—"it made me feel terribly—eh—fond of you."

For a moment Marjorie was nonplussed. There was a kind of light—not the brightest ever seen—

but a light, in Walter's eyes, that embarrassed her. No one had ever made love to her before, but she guessed what was going on. For another moment the idea thrilled her; then it set up a mild panic in her heart. She blushed, and laughed nervously.

"If I should ever find that you were cross at me," she hastened to say, "then all I'd have to do would be to sing to you." With that counter she withdrew her hand from his and hastened to add: "I'm sure the Nordofs are not coming home for hours. We'd better go."

"Why hurry when it's so comfortable here?"

"I don't think we know them well enough to use their drawing room for a—a playground," she replied, and picking up her parasol, she called the maid to say that they were going.

On their way back to the hotel Marjorie took refuge in teasing Walter about his sensitiveness, for he insisted on keeping to the same key that he had struck in the Nordof's drawing room. Marjorie would have none of it. She felt that she had ventured further than she had meant to go, and with the innate wisdom of a daughter of the house of Caner, she meant to know more of the way ahead before skipping unseeing into the dark—no matter how

strongly her womanly curiosity might beckon her to exploration.

Her thoughts, which were now dwelling closely about this young man, were abruptly diverted when she returned to the hotel. There she found that her mother had been taken suddenly ill, and while Mrs. Caner rallied the next day, her condition was such that she was kept to her bed for three days. During that time Marjorie was constantly with her, and only saw Walter for a moment as he came to inquire for the invalid or bring her some flowers. On the third day Mrs. Caner felt better and determined to return to Versailles, where she could command the attention of the physician who had looked after her health for the past ten years.

Walter saw them off at the station, but it was a hurried leave-taking, and Marjorie's mind was all on her mother, for the doctor at the hotel had warned her that her mother's health was precarious. She gave the young man her address, told him that she would be glad to see him when he came up to Paris, and thanked him for the happy days he had given her.

Marjorie brought her mother to their apartment at Versailles, and there re-installed her with a trained nurse, under the watchful care of an old friend and



physician. Complication followed complication. Marjorie was told that only a major operation could save her mother's life, but before Mrs. Caner could be transferred to the hospital, the summons came. The nurse was off duty. It was late in the afternoon. Marjorie had taken her place. She was sitting by her mother's side, holding her hand. Suddenly she felt a slight pressure upon her fingers. She looked into her mother's face. The sick woman was trying to speak. Her lips moved but no sound came forth. Marjorie rushed to the telephone. She called the doctor, and returned to her mother's bedside. The girl knew then that the end had come. It came before the doctor arrived.

Marjorie herself, all alone, closed her mother's eyes for her last long sleep.

It was not until days afterward that she could bring herself to read the cablegrams which had come in answer to the news of her mother's death which had been flashed across the seas. Among them was one from her father. It read: "Come home! Draw on me for whatever you need!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### TWO POINTS OF VIEW.

**I**N the warm, handsomely-furnished drawing-room of Morris T. Caner, the steel and railroad plutocrat, it was not easy to realize that those outside found it one of the bitterest winter evenings New York had ever known. Luxurious comfort was the keynote within. Curtains were drawn at the windows, steam heat diffused itself from cunningly-hidden radiators, and blazing logs in the great open fireplace bestowed warmth and cheeriness together.

The light of the fire twinkled on the costly Gobelin panels, framed in silver, on the massive furniture, on the grand piano, on the tall Hawthorn vase with its cluster of stately calla lilies, and on the long carved table, with its priceless porcelain jars from Peking, its ivory ornaments from Hindostan, and its tall candelabra that cast a soft glow upon them from the depths of richly-chased shades made by the most skillful artificers of old Florence.

Morris Caner was not only a "captain of industry," he was also noted as a collector of *objets d'art*. He cared nothing for the cost when he heard that a fine picture, a rare porcelain, a wonderful gem, or a unique book was on the market. In such a case his instructions to his agents were to *get it!*

He did not trust to agents altogether, either. In the course of many years of collecting he had acquired a knowledge of antiquities, with the instinct that enabled him to detect a fraud without knowing just how he did it. This instinct comes to most collectors in time. Often when he learned that some precious curio might be obtained at a reasonable price by one who understood such things, he would go on a still hunt alone, and often with success.

He had returned from such a hunt that afternoon, much to his profit. And now he was gloating over a beautiful porcelain vase—the result of that expedition.

It was half-past six o'clock, and Caner, with two of his men friends, were getting through that most pleasant of all times in a home of wealth, the hour before dinner, talking over things in which all were interested, and incidentally admiring the host's new purchase.

The two friends were Doctor Joseph Thayer and

Albert Sewall, the latter a distinguished musician and composer. The doctor was about fifty years of age—that is, some five years younger than Caner, while Sewall, with his leonine head of grey hair, his quick, nervous movements, his clear-cut, mobile features and his dancing eyes, might have been any age between twenty-five and sixty. As a matter of fact, he was forty-nine, according to *Who's Who*. Also, he was recorded as having been born in America, notwithstanding that he had a rather strong foreign accent, which people said was Viennese.

Caner was hovering about the large table, on which stood the vase that pleased him so.

"Look at that!" he chuckled. "Isn't it a beauty—a little masterpiece? Not another like it in this country! Not one! Picked it up at auction to-day, right under Duveen's nose. He never saw it. If he had he would have given his eyes for it. Ha, ha, ha! Duveen! I've beaten him, hands down. Ha, ha, ha!"

He took the vase in his hands and held it under the shade of the nearest candelabrum, so that the light could shine full upon it, laughing like a pleased schoolboy.

"You know," he chuckled, "the wise ones passed it over. Said it had no pedigree. But I've made



rather an exhaustive study of Asiatic porcelains, and I guessed what it was. You think all I know is coke and steel, eh? But I've got an instinct—an instinct!" he finished, patting the porcelain with real pride and affection.

"Undoubtedly," threw in Albert Sewall. "If you had turned your thoughts to music, in your youth, instead of to business, you might have composed the great lost harmony we musicians have been searching for since King David swept it from his harp strings and then allowed to fly away forever."

"If David had been a man of business he wouldn't have let a good thing get away from him," grunted Caner. "But, as I was about to say, I don't need a catalogue to tell me when I see a genuine antique. That isn't all. I bought better than I knew. Old Humphries—he's collecting porcelains to send back to China—he knows, the old dog!"

He pranced about the room in his excitement, but soon stopped, with a muffled groan. Bending involuntarily, he pressed a hand to his right leg.

"Great Scott! I forgot that confounded rheumatism! Never mind. What do you suppose Humphries told me when I showed him the vase? Why, it was produced in the Ming dynasty—about 1403—Hsuan-te reign."

"I don't want to see your old antiques," laughed Sewall. "I want to see your real flesh and blood—Marjorie! I've come to see her! Where's little Marjorie?"

"She hasn't arrived yet," replied Caner crustily. "Romney's gone to meet her."

"Humph!" grunted Sewall with some contempt.

Caner ignored him, and turning the vase over in his fingers lovingly, held it so that its cerulean sheen got the full benefit of the light.

"Look here you two," he went on with enthusiasm, "see that? That's what you call Mohammedan blue. What do you think of it?"

Doctor Thayer gave only a passing glance at the vase—he was not an enthusiast, as was Caner—and pointing to the latter's leg, said, dourly:

"That's quite a bit of luck for you, Morris. But you've no business to be dancing about on that rheumatic leg of yours!"

"It's *my* leg," rejoined Caner, resentfully

"But you're *my* patient. Sit down."

The doctor thrust his arm through Caner's, and taking the vase from him, placed it carefully on the table. Then he led his refractory patient to a chair.

"I *won't* sit down!" barked Caner. "I'm bored with sitting down! I'll stand."

And stand he did, although he compromised to the extent of leaning against the table. Sewall shook a fist at him. "If you can stand up, you ought to be down at the pier!"

"I suppose I should," grumbled Caner.

"If I had a daughter arriving from France to-night——" added the composer.

"Well, you haven't," cut in Caner. "My daughter's coming home to-night—not yours!"

"It seems to me," jeered Sewall, "that you're taking a violent interest in her all at once."

"Only because he can't help himself," put in Thayer.

Caner nodded. "That's the truth! I tell you, Joe, I don't want *any* woman in my house."

"Selfish brute!" ejaculated Thayer, while Sewall raised his eyes and hands deprecatingly.

"If I had any decent relatives living, I'd pack the girl off to them. She'll be a confounded nuisance, I know—a positive embarrassment."

"Lovely woman an embarrassment!" exclaimed Sewall, *sotto voce*. "Can such things be?"

Doctor Thayer placed a hand on Caner's shoulder as he remarked, with sardonic humor: "You know, Morris, it's barely possible—that you may like your daughter when you see her."

"There isn't a chance."

"Don't be too sure. When did you see her last?"

Caner reflected a moment, and the shrug of his shoulders might have meant anything although hardly regret, as he murmured thoughtfully:

"I haven't laid eyes on her for fourteen years."

"Fourteen years!" came in a whisper from Sewall.

"I didn't realize it was so long as that," was Thayer's comment. "Why didn't you bring her home yourself, three months ago, when her mother died?"

The millionaire started up and angrily paced the room. When he returned it was with clenched fists and down-drawn brows that he replied:

"When my wife and I separated, that was the end."

"The end between you and your wife maybe, but not between you and your child. Morris, I'm ashamed of you."

There could be no doubt that Doctor Joseph Thayer spoke from his soul. His voice quivered with indignation and he glared savagely.

"I've done all that could be expected of me under the circumstances," declared Caner in grudging apology. "I made no fuss when my wife took Marjorie away. I always gave them all the money they could spend."



"Did you ever give Marjorie a *thought*?"

"I gave her an allowance—a damn big one."

"Did you ever write your daughter a single *letter*?"

"Yes I did," answered Caner, triumphantly. "I wrote her when I got word of her mother's death."

"I'm glad you did that much to comfort her."

"Yes, I told her to draw on me for whatever she wanted."

"Very tender!" grunted Doctor Thayer. "You say you wrote to her. But I know that Romney Evans spared you even that feeble effort?"

Morris Caner shifted uneasily from his sound leg to the rheumatic one, and back again, as he snapped:

"What's the use of having a lawyer if he can't write an occasional letter for you? Besides, Romney likes writing in words of one syllable. I don't."

Thayer looked at the man of many corporations—whose word in Wall Street could make other millionaires tremble—and the look expressed withering contempt. Then he said, slowly and emphatically:

"Morris, you've succeeded in everything in this life—except as a father. Yes, by Jove, in that you've been a failure—a failure, Morris. Just as much as any drunken old slob who neglects his family. In fact, you're a h—l of a father!"

Caner turned on him hotly, banging a fist down on the table.

"You didn't know my wife!"

"Yes, I did!" thundered Thayer. "She was a fine woman. She had too much spirit to put up with your temper!"

"My temper? She was the most obstinate woman that ever lived. Why, she died just to—to—irritate me."

Sewall, from behind the cloud of his cigar smoke, shot out the remark: "All I've got to say is that I hope you'll treat the daughter better than you did the wife."

"I won't take any nonsense from Marjorie. You can depend on that," was the sharp rejoinder.

Doctor Thayer shook his head with a cold smile, as if he considered Caner hopeless. But he didn't say so. Instead: "Then take some advice from me, Morris. Lavish a little attention on her. Treat her as if she were your pet railroad. Remember, you old grouch, she is your only child—your heiress."

"Heiress? H'm! More trouble! Men after her for *my* money."

"There's the pity of it—for her!" exclaimed the doctor. "It will be your part, as her father, to prevent her being annoyed or cajoled, or——"

"It's happened already," said Caner, in a low tone, as he saw that Sewall was out of hearing at the back of the piano, looking over some sheet music. "Some cub she met in Nice last summer—Nicolls is his name. Impudent young beggar! Called at my office a few weeks ago. Gave me the idea that he and Marjorie are pretty close friends. Damn him!"

"Have you taken the trouble to look him up?"

"Yes, I have! He's a drone, a waster, a parasite, brought up with a notion that all he has to do is to marry some rich girl!" Caner waxed more angry as he talked. "But I won't have him in my family! I'll break his infernal neck first!"

"I wouldn't do that," laughed Doctor Thayer. "Some other family might want him, if yours doesn't."

"I don't think so," replied Caner. Then, as he saw a liveried servant in the room, he asked, sharply: "Well, Blodgett, what is it?"

"Miss Marjorie Caner! Mr. Romney Evans!" announced Blodgett with the stony detachment of the well-trained footman.

"Good Lord!" groaned Caner cavernously, as the girl and her escort, followed by the faithful Celeste, appeared on the threshold of his drawing-room.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A LITTLE GIRL IN A BIG, STRANGE HOUSE

**F**RAMED in the tapestried doorway, stood Marjorie, dressed in the deepest of French mourning, looking like a little black butterfly whose drooping wings, buffeted by an unfriendly wind, had carried her into a strange, forbidding garden. Her pale, oval face, under the chic hat, was caressed by tiny tendrils of pale gold hair, and lighted by two grey eyes whose dark lashes momentarily swept the cheeks beneath them, to be as quickly lifted in wistful question.

The girl knew enough of the character of her father not to anticipate a happy return to that home from which she had been exiled for fourteen years, but she was optimistic and felt that with tact she might finally succeed where her mother had failed.

So she looked from one to the other of the three men, scattered about the room like so many wax figures, and with a wondering smile asked:



"Which is my papa?"

Caner, looking the least little bit shamefaced, but still with the echo of a growl in his deep voice, took a step toward the girl and said:

"I'm your father!"

Having made this announcement, he seemed not to know what to do next. So he put out a fishy hand and jerked out:

"How do you do?"

Marjorie took the hand, and, very much to Caner's embarrassment, ventured, hesitatingly:

"In France, fathers kiss their—their daughters. Isn't it done here?"

A laugh from Sewall, which he tried to turn into a cough, made the millionaire glance angrily in his direction. Then, in reply to the girl, Morris Caner stammered:

"I—I believe something of the kind *is* done in New York, just as it is in Paris—by some persons. It—ah—all depends upon how you feel about it."

"I feel about it just like any other girl," returned Marjorie, wistfully. "But perhaps you—you don't feel about it like—some fathers. You see, I'm rather a—a strange daughter to you."

"For God's sake, kiss the girl!" exclaimed Sewall, as if he could not bear the strain any longer.

"I'm going to—I'm going to!" snapped Caner.

"I wish she was *my* daughter," murmured Albert Sewall to himself.

"You know, papa," put in Marjorie, with a mischievous smile dimpling the corners of her mouth, although her eyes showed that she was perilously near tears, "you have to begin some time, so it may as well be now!"

"I suppose so," was his gruff response.

He bent down and pecked at her cheek, as she kissed him daintily.

"There," laughed Marjorie. "It's all over. You didn't mind *very* much—did you?"

"Mind it?" he returned, with a grunt. "Why should I mind it? I may not be the perfect pattern of a father, but I dare say I'm no worse than you expected."

"I think you are going to turn out very well," she assured him.

"Then you're not disappointed in me, eh?"

She looked at him as if she did not comprehend the full meaning of the query. There was a touch of sarcasm in his tone, as if he wanted her to realize that it would make no particular difference what her sentiments might be.

"Oh, no," she answered. "I was afraid you

wouldn't care to have me here at all. But you seem to be—to be—er—quite"—she paused, as if trying to hit on a suitable word, and finally came out with—"cordial."

Again that distressing high-pitched laughter, smothered by a cough, from Albert Sewall.

"You really are glad to see me, papa?" and there was a world of wistfulness in the question.

"Eh?" he blurted out. "What—what's that?"

Doctor Thayer lost patience and hurled himself headlong into the limping colloquy.

"Of course you're glad to see her!" he insisted. "Tell her how glad you are."

"Yes—yes. I'm glad—certainly," obeyed Caner.

"Thank you, papa. That's going to make it ever so much easier for me."

"You're a strange little thing."

It had escaped him almost before he knew he had spoken. The girl took it up quickly.

"I do feel a little strange," she admitted, with a stifled sigh. "I suppose that's because I've been away from home so long." Then, rather dolefully: "This big place *is* 'home,' isn't it?"

"Naturally."

Her father's cold assurance gave her little comfort. She seemed more forlorn than ever, as she

looked about and murmured: "*Home!*" Then, in nervous haste, "Where's Romney? Oh, there you are."

She took Romney Evans's proffered hand and clung to him as if for protection against the spacious magnificence and the coldness. She felt as if it were crushing and chilling her.

"And this is Doctor Thayer," introduced Caner, adding, with a dry smile: "One of the most disagreeable friends I have."

"You don't look a bit disagreeable," she said, shyly offering her hand to the doctor.

"And I'm not, either, my dear," he answered. "I only wish I were an uncle, or a brother, of yours—anything that would entitle me to a kiss."

"Perhaps, when I know you better——"

"Good Lord!" interrupted her father. "You don't need to kiss every man you meet."

"I know that, papa. But I had to hug Romney at the pier. I couldn't help it. We've been such friends, writing to each other for years." She put her hand trustfully in his. "Haven't we, Romney?"

"Indeed we have," returned Romney Evans, patting her hand gently.

"And, papa, I knew him right away, as soon as I saw him on the wharf. Didn't I, Romney?"



"Yes, and she'd never even seen a photograph of me."

"But he'd written me such a cunning description of himself. He told me to look for a tall, grey-headed man, with a little red feather in his hat. And there he was, holding up his hat, so that I could see the red feather and his grey head at the same time. I hope you didn't catch cold, Romney. To think of such a smart man putting a red feather in his silk hat and waving it about, just for me!"

"Hah!" grunted Caner, visualizing the picture with grim humor and inadvertently stamping with his game boot. Then, with a groan, he lifted his foot from the floor, and leaning on the table, muttered:

"Deuce take it!"

"Oh, papa!" cried Marjorie, full of contrition. "I forgot. Please forgive me. How is your foot? Romney told me about it."

"Bad—very bad," he replied, with a look of resentment at his physician.

"What are you giving him, doctor?" inquired Marjorie in the most practical manner.

"Aspirin."

"That's good. I know. Mother and I——"

She stopped, turned her back to them, put a hand-

kerchief to her eyes for a moment, and then recovering her composure, went on:

"When we were in Paris we had a concierge with rheumatism. We gave him aspirin every two hours! It cured him. And surely if it would cure a concierge it ought to cure papa." She appealed to Thayer. "Perhaps he doesn't obey your orders! I don't suppose he is a very good patient. Men aren't!"

"Your father is the worst patient in the Western Hemisphere," declared Thayer, vehemently.

"I thought so. Papa, have you taken your medicine?"

"I—I don't remember," was the hesitating reply.

"Where is your medicine?" she demanded.

"I don't know," he admitted, silently.

She shook her head at him in reproof, while Albert Sewall chuckled at the back of the piano.

"But, papa, you must take it—at once. How are we to get you well if you don't?"

"All right," he grumbled. "I'll take it. I'll take it. Now run along and dress for dinner. And—ah—look here, Marjorie,"

"Yes, papa?"

He pointed to her black dress with an impatient gesture.

"I don't want you dressed like that. It's too much

black for a little girl like you. I want you to take it off. Take it all off."

Marjorie looked at him wide-eyed, solemnly. She felt behind her for Romney Evans's hand, and he took hers and held it comfortingly. Then, speaking very softly, she said:

"But, papa, I wear this for—mother."

"I know—I know!" he cut her off. "But I'd rather see you in a more cheerful-looking frock." Disregarding her wondering, sorrowing look, he called: "Blodgett!"

Blodgett, the imperturbable, stepped into the room. Evidently he had been not far away.

"Marjorie," continued her father, "this is Blodgett. Blodgett, show Miss Marjorie and her maid to their rooms."

"Yes, sir," responded Blodgett. Then, taking a letter from his pocket he handed it to Marjorie. "This came for you this morning, miss."

"Thank you." She took the letter, glanced at the superscription, and blushed slightly.

Marjorie made a dignified bow to the men, and smiled faintly at Albert Sewall's rather extravagant bow in return. Then she followed Blodgett and Celeste out of the room.

"You saw that letter, Romney?" exclaimed Caner,

in repressed excitement, as his daughter disappeared. "It was Nicolls's monogram on the envelope."

"Indeed? You need not be uneasy," was Romney's response. "I mentioned Nicolls to Marjorie coming up in the car."

"You did? What did you say to her?"

"I suggested—mildly—that she must be sure the young man has not been more dazzled by her wealth than her beauty."

"A neat compliment to the young lady!" smiled Thayer. "It must have pleased her."

"Keep quiet, Joel!" snapped Caner. Then, to Romney: "What did she say?"

"Nothing much. She doesn't love him. You may rest assured of that. She only thinks he does!"

"Romney, has X-ray powers of penetration," mocked Caner.

"I can see through you, for all the frost on your panes," retorted Romney.

"Frost is the right word," remarked Doctor Thayer, sententiously.

"Morris, you may not realize it, but that little thing is lonely. She wants something to love. Nicolls is the first young man she has ever known intimately."

"Intimately!" exploded Caner. "There you are. What did I tell you, Joe? Look here, Romney! Do



you suppose there is an understanding between them?"

"Possibly. But, from what I gathered, I should say that Nicolls is merely on probation. I wouldn't worry about her—her spirits, I mean." He paused in thought and then added: "Christmas is day after to-morrow. We've got to make it cheery for Marjorie."

"We will—we will!" groaned Caner. "I'll give her a pearl necklace—an automobile——"

"You talk like a barbarian," broke in Romney Evans. "It isn't presents she wants. It's cheerful companionship, diversion."

"All right! All right! I'll give her a ball."

"Your ideas are primitive!" groaned Romney. "Marjorie doesn't want a ball. The poor child is in mourning."

"Then I give it up! I'll leave her to you. I'll give her to you. Romney, I wish you'd marry her."

"I would if I were twenty-five years younger—" laughed the lawyer, "and she were willing."

"I'm serious," insisted Caner. "She'd be safe with you."

"No girl wants to be *safe*. She wants to be happy."

"What do you know about it, anyway?"

"I remember what you, you old fossil, never knew," rejoined Romney, with some warmth. "That

is youth! *You* don't know what that means. It isn't middle age. It's romance. That's what Marjorie needs to make her happy—her own romance."

"Pooh!" jeered Caner. "Romance is a myth!"

"I know I missed it," returned Romney, sadly. "I know it. But Marjorie shan't. This is the open mating season for her, and, by Jove! I'm going to keep it open for her."

"I'll have something to say about that," retorted Caner, hotly.

"No, you won't."

"That will do," interposed Doctor Thayer. "There's no use arguing about it! Come on, Romney. Let's have a go at billiards."

"Is there time before dinner?" objected Romney.

"Plenty," declared Caner, rising, rather painfully, from his chair. "It'll take that girl an hour to powder her nose."

"You can't stand around and play on that leg," said Thayer, authoritatively. "We'll let you score."

"I won't score," was Caner's prompt negative. "Sewall and I will have a go at chess. Eh, Sewall?"

"I can beat you again," laughed Sewall, as he gave Caner his arm and walked with him out of the room.

"No, you can't!" retorted the millionaire.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WILL AGAINST WILL.

“**B**LODGETT, is this the state drawing-room room, or what?”

It was Marjorie who asked the question. She had come down, dressed for dinner, in a white gown, and finding nobody in the drawing-room, pressed a button to bring somebody. She was insufferably lonesome. Even Blodgett would be a relief.

“This is the *small* drawing-room,” replied Blodgett, stiffly. “The large drawing-room, the music-room and the gallery are over there, miss.”

He extended his left arm to point. Then he dropped it and stood, in his usual wooden attitude, to wait for orders from the new lady of the house.

The butler looked as if he had no interest in anything, particularly in Marjorie. But beneath his stolid manner there was already a very warm regard for the young girl. He had told himself he was going to like Miss Marjorie Caner.

She did not speak, so he made a suggestion. It was not in accordance with his notions of etiquette to say anything unless he were addressed. But he felt that this was an unusual situation, and he must meet it in an unusual way. So he boomed forth solemnly:

"I'll have the other drawing-room, music-room and gallery lighted up, if you wish, miss."

"No, thank you," replied Marjorie, shivering. "This room is big enough and cold enough for me."

"The thermometer records seventy-five, miss," said Blodgett, more stiffly than ever. "We try to keep the rooms comfortable."

"Nobody could be comfortable in this room," she insisted, "except a giant and his family. The furniture is perfectly enormous." She tripped over to a cumbersome throne-chair and tried to move it. "Why is everything arranged in this stiff way? That day-enport, for instance, looks as if it were posing for its photograph."

"The furniture has always been that way, miss."

"I'd change it myself—only it's all nailed down."

"Excuse me, miss, but it's *not* nailed down," protested Blodgett, on whose bumpy forehead the perspiration was beginning to gather. "The things are heavy, but they can be moved when desired."



"Then we'll move them now," announced Marjorie, triumphantly. "Help me, Blodgett."

"I beg your pardon, miss. I shouldn't like to without Mr. Caner's permission. I hope you won't insist, miss."

"I *do* insist, Blodgett. We'll begin with this hulking old davenport. But we shall have to push the table aside first."

"I know Mr. Caner, miss," faltered the badgered Blodgett. "He won't like it. He won't like it!"

The girl burst into a peal of merry laughter. It was the first time Blodgett had heard it, and he liked the sound. Still, this unheard-of disturbance of a room that was held sacred by everybody dulled his enjoyment of the music, and he groaned as the girl replied cheerfully:

"My father might not like the change if we asked him. But we won't. When he *sees* how we have improved things, he'll be so surprised and delighted that he will——"

"He will give me my notice, I'm afraid, miss," interrupted Blodgett, miserably.

"Good gracious, Blodgett! If that is what you are afraid of, I'll take the blame. Take the other end of that davenport and swing it around. That's the way. Not that there will be any blame. I am

sure my father will be pleased. He would have made these changes himself if ever he had thought of them."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Blodgett.

"Your own decorative sense, Blodgett," she went on, gaily, "must tell you that this davenport ought to face the fireplace. There! That's splendid! Now the table! We want it against the back of the davenport."

The davenport and table disposed of to her liking, she stood back to survey the effect, while Blodgett, who had nailed his colors to the mast, murmured:

"I'm afraid you'll be sorry, miss."

"Now, let me see," she exclaimed, disregarding his lamentations. "What next?"

"You're not going to move anything else, are you, miss?" ventured the worried Blodgett.

"Oh, yes," she assured him, lightly. "We've only just begun. That throne-chair over there! I want it right here, where I am standing. Can you move it alone? Or shall I help you?"

"I can move it," he answered. Then, as he brought the chair to the spot she had pointed out, he appealed to her pathetically:

"Excuse me, miss, but haven't we done enough for to-night?"

"I haven't decided yet. Now then, you like the chair this way, don't you?"

"I beg your pardon, miss, but, speaking the truth as it comes to me, I must say I think the old way is the safest."

"The 'safest'?" she quizzed.

Before he could reply, the stern voice of Morris Caner made him jump:

"Blodgett, are you out of your mind?"

Past speaking was Blodgett. He stood between two fires, and both were scorching him. On one side was this insistent young lady, who had taken her place as head of her father's household at a bound, while on the other was the fiery Morris Caner, accustomed to instant and implicit obedience.

It was the young girl who faced the storm of her father's wrath, and, as it were, invited the charge. With her hand on the large throne chair, which, under her direction, had been moved from its usual place, she gazed cheerfully into the eyes of her parent and championed poor Blodgett.

"He is not out of his mind, papa. Blodgett has been helping me. He doesn't like the new arrangement, but I think it is quite an improvement. Don't you?"

"I do not!" He saw no wavering in Marjorie's

steady gaze. So he swung tempestuously upon Blodgett: "What do you mean, Blodgett, by moving the furniture about in this disorderly manner?"

"I thought, sir, that——" began Blodgett, feebly.

"You don't have to lie like a gentleman, Blodgett," interrupted the girl, sweetly. Then, to her father: "I *made* him do it. I told him I'd discharge him if he didn't . . . Didn't I, Blodgett?"

"Oh, you did?" ejaculated Caner with biting sarcasm. "You told him *you'd* discharge him? Who do you think you are, anyway?"

"Why," she returned, calmly, "I naturally supposed, papa, when you invited me to live with you, that I would be mistress of the house."

Morris Caner turned his back on the girl, ignoring her, as he growled at the shrinking Blodgett: "Put that furniture back where you found it—and see that it stays there."

"But, papa," interposed Marjorie, "it looks so much better the way it is."

"Blodgett, you understand what I said?"

"Yes, sir," bleated Blodgett.

While Blodgett busied himself with the furniture, Marjorie moved so that her father could not avoid her gaze, and there was a great deal of his own strong will in the clear eyes, as she said: "It is not



polite for you to countermand my orders in this way."

"This is my house—not yours, young lady," he snarled.

"You're certainly not making me feel very much at home in it," was her retort. "Is this the way you treated—mother," she added, with a little catch in her voice.

Caner started angrily. Then, through his world-hardened nature swept a consciousness that perhaps he had been rather brutal. Strange for him. It was not his disposition to acknowledge himself in the wrong, particularly to a child like this. Perhaps he saw in the delicate figure and pretty face of the girl something that reminded him of the wife he had known when she was not much older than Marjorie. At all events, his tone was almost gentle as he bowed perhaps a little lower than he had ever bowed before and said quietly:

"Marjorie, I lost my temper. I beg your pardon."

"Well," she returned, smiling through her tear-dimmed eyes. "I really think you should beg my pardon. Although I know it must be very hard for a big man like you to apologize to a little girl like me."

"Never mind about that," was his hurried response. "I think we can come to an understanding.

Of course this is your home now, and the servants are to obey you." He paused. Then, with a gulp: "You may have whatever you want for your comfort or pleasure—so long as it does not upset the present order of things in the household."

"Thank you, papa." She was cheerful again, her spirits rising buoyantly at this first sign of humaneness on his part. "I can have anything I want? You mean that, papa?"

"Yes! Anything within reason. So long as you do not move the furniture."

"Not even one little footstool?" she queried.

"Not one," was the emphatic reply.

Morris Caner hobbled out of the room.

"Now, Blodgett," admonished Marjorie when they were alone, "you heard what my father said? I am to have whatever I want."

"Yes, miss," assented Blodgett, doubtfully.

"Let me see. What first? Oh, yes! I want you to get me some flowers—orchids, and roses, and tiger-lilies, and jonquils, and yellow chrysanthemums—thousands of them. Order them the first thing in the morning. I shall die if I don't cheer this place up."

"Is that all, miss?"

"No. Are there any pets in this house—animals, birds, fishes?"

"No, indeed, miss!" returned the scandalized Blodgett. "Your father would not have anything of that kind about."

"Surely the cook has a cat?"

"The cook is a chef, miss."

"Well, can't a chef have a cat?"

"Not here, miss," declared Blodgett, positively.

"Mr. Caner would not permit it for a moment."

"That's because he's never had any pets. I want you to get me a dog—any kind of dog, an Angora cat, a dozen canary birds, an aquarium of goldfish, and two or three pairs of squirrels!"

Poor Blodgett, rubbing one hand over the other, while the perspiration came out on his bumpy forehead as it always did when he was perplexed, shook his head.

"I wouldn't dare, miss."

"Then I'll order them myself. Oh, and another thing. I want at least fifty sofa-pillows—nice, big, soft pillows!"

Blodgett was saved from commenting on this awful determination of the self-willed young lady by a buzzing that told him somebody had been admitted to the front hall. He hurried out. A moment later he returned, with a card on a silver salver.

Marjorie, puzzled, took up the card and looked

at it. "Mr. Walter Nicolls," she read to herself and smiled, just the least bit perturbed, for there, tucked in the waist of her dress was the letter from him, which Blodgett had given her almost immediately upon her rival. Under the watchful eye of Celeste, her faithful dragon, the girl had only had time to glance through it as she quickly dressed for dinner, but she saw enough to make her lonely little heart beat. It was her first love letter.

She had hardly known what to make of it. She wanted time to read and ponder over it alone. One thing was certain, the letter pleased her, made her happy, for it impressed upon her—more than she realized—that here was someone who cared a great deal for her; and it seemed to her—in the light of her father's 'casual, not to say, brusque welcome—that fate had sent the young man to her when most she needed him. She was, indeed, in that frame of mind, when the right word would call her gladly to another home, which she might happily make for the man who vowed that he loved her.

All this and more shot through her mind and warmed her heart, as she looked at the card, and finally raised her eyes and said with sudden eagerness: "Blodgett, ask Mr. Nicolls to come in!"



## CHAPTER IX.

SOMEHOW, THE RING DID NOT FIT HER FINGER.

**I**N that brief moment while she waited there, standing behind the piano, Marjorie's pulse ascended far above normal. No lover had ever come more opportunely than Walter Nicolls. The very fact that he was associated in the girl's mind with those last happy days spent with her mother at Nice, warmed her heart to him; and when he pushed aside the draperies which framed the doorway, and entered with his confident, but quizzical air—immaculate, debonnaire in his well-fitting dinner jacket—the girl impulsively held out a hand to him across the piano, and greeted him with a cordial, "Hello, Walter!"

"Hello, Marjorie!" he returned and hastened to grasp the hand held out to him. As he looked at her then, he felt more than encouraged. He was quite sure that he had made no mistake in losing no time. He had planned this visit from the moment that he

had learned of her prospective home-coming. At first he had intended to meet her at the pier, but his exchequer was low and he could not picture himself among the throng of welcomers without an armful of expensive roses. No, this was quite all right, he assured himself, although he did not even guess how timorous she felt as she stood there, looking up into his eyes, wonderingly, and experiencing a strange little thrill. It was her closest approach to the alluring borderland of romance.

"I hope you don't mind, do you—my coming so soon?" he began, leading her to a settee below the piano. "Heard you were arriving to-night. Thought you wouldn't mind if I dropped in. Wanted to catch you alone——"

"Oh, no," she assured him. "Only I wasn't expecting you—not to-night." She sank down on the settee. "Papa has some of his old friends to dinner, to meet me, or I'd ask you to stay."

"Thanks, just the same," he chirped. "Couldn't possibly do it. Got a dinner engagement myself—stag affair at the Knickerbocker. Taxi's waiting! But the fact is, I had to come to-night. I have something for you."

He dropped down beside her and took a small jeweler's box from his waistcoat pocket.

"I'm sure you'll like it," he went on, solemnly. "It's a sort of combination of Christmas present and—well, you'll see!"

He opened the box and took out a showy white satin case, which he placed in her hand.

"I selected the case with a great deal of care. Tiffany's—that's where I got it. Wouldn't think of going anywhere else for a thing like this. Press the spring, and——"

"But, Walter," she protested, uncertainly. "I——"

"Press the spring—press the spring! Ah! There you are! Not a large, vulgar diamond, but fine—very fine! I knew you wouldn't care about the size."

It was a small solitaire diamond ring. She looked at it without offering to take it from its little white bed.

"It is pretty—very pretty," she murmured. "But we hadn't said anything about a ring, you know."

"No—not exactly. But you got my letter this evening, didn't you? I sent it here."

"Yes. Only I hadn't made up my mind how I should answer it."

"Don't bother about that," he interrupted, cheerfully. "I'll make up your mind for you." He took the ring from the case. "Here's the ring. Now, where's the finger?"

She put her hand behind her.

"You mustn't be in such a hurry," she objected. "We never talked about any subject so—so serious as this—in Nice."

"You never let me," he reminded her. "You always put me off—telling me we didn't know each other well enough. But since last summer I've done a lot of thinking about you, and—well, Marjorie, the time has come—hasn't it—when there should be something definite? So let me put this ring on your finger, and we'll be definitely engaged."

Still she withheld her hand from him, and asked: "And then, what?"

"Then? Why, we'll be married, of course, just as soon as—as you wish. I suppose your father will have something to say about it. What do you think?"

"I don't know what he'll say at first. But, in the end he will let me—do whatever I wish."

"Good!" broke out Walter, in a relieved tone. "That's settled. When shall we be married?"

"Before I answer that," she returned, "so long as I am taking all the responsibility for you, I hope you won't mind if I ask you a few questions."

"Oh," he assured her promptly, "I'm all right—perfectly healthy. I play a lot of golf and tennis, and



so on—weather permitting. Then, through the winter, I am dancing all the time. That keeps me in fine condition.”

“You look well,” was her dry response. “But what I was going to ask is, how would you take care of me—after we were married?”

“Oh, I’ll take splendid care of you. Never let you go out without your furs when it is cold. And—and when you are not feeling fit, I’ll bring you candy and flowers, and so on.”

“Yes,” she smiled. “I’m sure you would do all that. But——”

“That’s nothing,” he interrupted, largely. “I’ll take you around everywhere—dinners, dances! I’ll show you what living is. We’ll entertain a lot. Very formally—footmen, all dolled up, behind every chair. Informally—that is where I come in—cabaret! We’ll have the Castles! They come high, but I can get them—know them myself. And, of course, we’ll have a car or two. A big blue limousine, with my crest on it, and one of those low, sporty ones to tour in. And we’ve *got* to have a town and a country house—on an island. That’s where we’ll put our country house. I know the very island we want. That means a yacht. And whenever we get bored stiff here, I’ll just up and take you abroad. We might go

to China, now the Continent is in such a mess."

Walter rattled all this off as glibly as if he had rehearsed it. Evidently a most fascinating picture presented itself to his mental vision. To Marjorie it seemed as if the enjoyment of all the pleasures and luxuries he named, which wealth alone can bring, filled such a spacious area in his mind that there was no room for the contemplation of the happiness of possessing herself. She was at best a secondary consideration.

She brought him down to earth by remarking, quietly:

"You must have a very large income."

"What?" he almost shouted. "I? My dear Marjorie, my income is so slender, I often wonder how it supports me."

"Wouldn't it be enough to support me too?"

"Never in the world."

"I could be very economical."

"Economical?" he repeated, in edifying disgust. "I don't like that. It is so unspeakably vulgar."

"Ah! I see. You're going to work."

"Work? I—I've never had to! What could I do, I wonder?"

"You must have *some* talents, haven't you?" she pressed.

"Oh, yes—yes, indeed," he began encouragingly. "When I was a kid, I used to draw things, you know. Awfully clever and all that. But I didn't keep it up. Then I have a great ear for music. I whistle, play the drum—the kettledrum. I can play any old thing on the drum. Makes it awfully jolly—with the pianola, or victrola. . . . What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing! Tell me, what is the best thing you can do?"

"Dance," he replied, promptly. "I'm a ripping good dancer. Only, I should not like to do it professionally. You wouldn't like me to do it—would you?"

"I don't think I should. So I'm afraid we couldn't depend on any of your—talents. That brings us down to your really *working* for me."

"You want me to go into business?" he asked, in an awe-stricken tone. "*Work?*"

"Why not? You *could*. Men *do*."

"But I haven't any leaning that way," he wailed. "If I—I got a job, I'd be fired the first week. Besides, it would not agree with me."

"It was only my suggestion. I don't know. Perhaps you have a better idea?"

There was a long pause. Obviously Walter Nicolls had received a painful shock. He coughed in em-

barrassment before he proceeded, then, gathering courage, he plunged in with: "Er—I—I rather thought that—that your father—er—might sort of—you know—set us up, as it were, to begin with—and—and——"

He trailed off into inaudibility, as it penetrated his rather thick perception that the girl was viewing him with unutterable disappointment. At last she spoke:

"Oh, that was your idea?"

"Isn't it the natural idea?" he defended his position. "You're his only child, aren't you?"

"And you think he is certain some day to leave me all his money?"

"It seems likely. Even if he went a bit dotty in his old age, and began to boost charity and all that sort of thing, you'd be bound to come in for all we—I mean, all *you*—would need. Why, only last month your father paid half a million for some musty old paintings not much larger than a double sheet of music. He considered them worth the money because they were knocked off by some old fossil a few hundred years ago. If he can afford that, I should think he'd be willing to do something pretty nifty for you—when you—er—marry. That is, if you put it up to him in the right way."

Marjorie's head had drooped, and she had turned



away from him. He continued hopefully:

"I know he's an uncomfortable old bird to approach. But you could get around him. A girl always can."

It was then that she rose and turned away from him, miserably disillusioned. When she spoke, her voice was even, dull, but firm.

"Perhaps I could 'get around him,' as you say—but I won't!"

"You won't? Why not?"

"I am afraid I have too much pride to ask my father to support the man I intend to marry."

She shut the ring in the case and handed it to him. He took it mechanically, but continued to hold it out toward her, as he faltered:

"I did not get this for myself, you know."

She shook her head to indicate that the incident was closed, but Nicolls persisted: "Just because I thought your father might——"

"Please—please, don't go over all that again," she entreated, and held out her hand. "Good-bye!" Her tone was even, colorless.

"Marjorie," he complained, disregarding her hand and giving the jewel case a toss before tucking it in his pocket, "you'll be sorry for treating me like this."

"I *am* sorry—sorry that you are not different!"

He could not understand her point of view. It was absolutely beyond his ken. "But," he insisted, blindly, "you liked me a great deal—when we were trotting around in Nice."

"I liked you then because I thought you were the kind of man that——" She could not say it. But out of her heart came a little cry of genuine disappointment and something more than that, which penetrated even Walter's dull intelligence: "Oh, Walter!"

He frowned, hesitated for an instant, and went on: "I may not be exactly what you think you want, but I'm a whole lot above the average—and it doesn't do for a girl to be too particular these days—when men are getting mighty scarce."

"Good-bye," she repeated in a monotone of finality.

"Oh, no! We won't say 'good-bye' yet. Think it over. I won't call it off. I'll give you what your father would call—an option on me—for one—kiss." He advanced a step toward her.

She gave him a look that stopped him. "No, thank you, just the same," and turned away from him to the great fireplace.

He followed her, saying: "Well, then, never mind the option!"

"Good-bye!" She spoke over her shoulder, and there was no mistaking then that he must go.

Irrepressibly he rejoined: "Oh, well, you've got my address. If I don't hear from you within a week or so, I'll drop around. *Au revoir!*"

As Walter went out one door, Blodgett passed another. Marjorie called to him, and as he paused at respectful attention, she said: "If Mr. Nicolls should ever call again, please say that I am not at home!"

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SPELL OF THE SONG.

“**S**URELY, that command does not refer to me!” Albert Sewall grinned this over the shoulder of the butler. If he had been wearing his glasses, instead of dangling them on the end of his fingers, he would have seen that it was no grinning mood in which he had found Marjorie. But at the sight of his cheery face and the sound of his wholesome, friendly voice, the tears, which were lurking in the corners of Marjorie’s eyes, ready to launch themselves down her cheeks, withdrew, and the youthful look of tragedy above them slowly faded. She was not one to wear her heart upon her sleeve for even the friendliest of daws to peck at.

“No, no—of course not,” she hastened to say. “It was just someone—who isn’t worth while seeing again.”

“I knew that couldn’t mean me,” he laughed, with a bow, his hand over his heart in cavalier fashion. “I’ve come to get acquainted.”



"That's very sweet of you!"

"Well, I thought you wouldn't mind philandering a bit with Old Papa Sewall. That's what all my children—and I have thousands of them—pupils and prima donnas—just children like you—call me. They are scattered all over the world. I hope you'll adopt me. You see, I've simply got to be adopted. That's the way it's done. That once settled, I'm very much at home and happy."

"I shall be very proud if you'll let me adopt you," smiled Marjorie. "I'll begin now—if you're sure it won't interfere with your billiards—I heard the clink of the balls, didn't I, as I came down the stairs?"

"You did, my dear," he replied, sitting on the big davenport beside her. "But don't let that worry you. I was not playing. Your father and I were thinking of having a go at chess, but he was not in the—er—mood. He is sitting on a high chair criticising the play of Romney and the Doctor. I was glad to escape."

"To be adopted—by little me! You—the great Sewall!" He laughingly protested. "Oh, you are great," she insisted. "I know lots of your music, but best of all I love 'The Order of the Rose.' I heard the opera in Paris. It was very, very beautiful!"

Albert Sewall burst into a leonine roar of laughter.

"Don't—don't, my dear, talk like a young ladies' seminary. No, no! You have more character—more *flair*. Permit me, won't you?"

He placed the tips of his long fingers delicately upon her forehead, and nodded in mock seriousness.

"I thought so. You have the bump of music. We shall be friends!"

The girl smiled up at him.

"Good!" he beamed back at her. "Now, look me straight in the eye. What is the best part of the opera that you say is so—ah—beautiful? Do you remember?"

"Yes. The overture to the second act." She darted to the piano and played the opening bars of the most musicianly piece that Sewall had turned out in his long career.

"Marvelous! You are marvelous!" he cried. "Those fool critics! They had to admit that Old Papa Sewall could write serious music. But they did not know what was best. Only you, and Waldsemüller, of Munich, knew."

"But I like all of it," she protested. "Oh, that lovely song to the sunset in the second act, and the dance in the third. They carried me off my feet."

"Naturally," he returned. "I had a book—a libretto—that inspired me. Now I am trying to find an-

other one as good! Oh, for a book! A book! That's what I want—a book! I can write symphonies out of my head—waltzes out of my fingers. But an opera? I must have a libretto! But where am I to get a book that is worth a note these days?"

"I wish I could get you a book," exclaimed Marjorie, sympathetically.

"I would give you ten thousand dollars for a *good* one," he declared, solemnly.

"Is that very much?" was her innocent query.

"Much? Why, yes! It is a fabulous price to pay in advance on royalties. But—we are so desperate—that is what we have done. My managers, they have offered a prize of ten thousand dollars for a libretto. I tell them *that* will bring the genius out of his garret."

"His garret?" repeated the girl, thoughtfully. "That's where geniuses come from, isn't it?"

"Surely," giped the composer. "That's where they grow—in garrets—where it is cold."

"But there's always a little flame inside of them"—her voice grew dreamy—"that keeps them warm. . . . Perhaps some genius will send you an opera book for a Christmas present."

"Pray for me, little lady," he besought her. "By the way," he went on, briskly, as he took a small roll

of manuscript from the tail-pocket of his evening coat and handed it to her, "*I've* got a Christmas present for *you*. It is a wee bit of a song. Written by my dear old self—and just for you."

"What a delightful Christmas present!" she purred, as she glanced over the manuscript. "And just for me!"

"Read the verse! Read the verse!" he insisted cheerily.

She spread out the manuscript, moved a little nearer to the tall shaded lamp at the side of the piano, and, in clear, tender tones, read:

"The world is blind; it only sings  
The praises of poets, masters and kings!  
Their words, their works, their deeds of flame,  
Win all the fame, win all the fame.

"So let my voice ring out for one  
Who has no fame for great deeds done.  
He spins no song, he rears no dome.  
Out of his heart he builds a home!

"He rules no realm! He's more than king!  
A woman's joy his harvesting!  
He spins no song, he rears no dome.  
Out of his heart he builds a home!"



As she finished, she looked up at Sewall with a bright smile.

"I love that," she breathed.

"I knew you would. Prodigious little idea, eh?"

"You—you are wonderful—Papa Sewall!"

"Oh, I didn't write the verse," he returned, quickly.

"Blessed if I know who did. Read it in a newspaper, and tore it out. Just like me—left the author's name behind me."

"I should like to know the man who wrote those lines," she murmured, half to herself.

"Come now, Marjorie!" broke in Sewall. "I'll play—you sing it!"

"I don't know whether I can sing it—at sight," she objected.

But Sewall was already seated at the piano, running over the prelude.

"You'll sing this, young lady. It's as easy as—kissing. There's the introduction. Now the song begins. I'll play the melody through for you first."

She was standing by his side now, and as she listened to the music which flowed so easily from his trained fingers, she exclaimed involuntarily:

"I love that, too."

"Good! Now! Come! Fill your little lungs, open your little mouth, and sing your little head off.

. . . No. I said *fill* your lungs—not *stuff* them. You know how to breathe, don't you?"

"Of course," she laughed. "But I don't know whether I *can* sing for you."

"Why not?"

"You, the great Albert Sewall! I—I'm afraid."

"Nonsense! The accompanist never listens. Now! Begin!"

He struck the opening chords, and there was nothing for Marjorie but to sing. Under the spell of the music, and because she delighted in that as well as in the words, she forgot her nervousness. Her fresh young voice suited the tender music, and Albert Sewall—in spite of his assertion that accompanists do not listen—was delighted.

"Bravo!" he shouted, as the song came to an end. "Splendid, little girl! You've paid for it!"

He handed the manuscript to her with a low bow, patting her hand paternally as she took it from him.

"Thank you so much," she said, earnestly. "I like it better than any Christmas present I can imagine. It will help to keep me from being lonely."

It was with another cheering but sympathetic laugh that Sewall heard this confession. "Lonely? You lonely in your father's house with all of us—his

friends, and each and all of us ready-made friends, parents or playmates, as you will, to keep you company, to sign ourselves, at any hour, 'devotedly yours!' " He made a bow. "Now I dare you to be lonely!" He finished with a flourish.

She looked up at him, smiling wistfully, then laughed a little—a low, silvery note.

"Hah, hah!" he exclaimed. "I knew you had a pretty laugh concealed about you somewhere. But what is it—the joke? You think we are too old for you—eh? Come! Out with it!"

"Well," she demurred, "with so many elderly friends—though, of course, I know I'm going to adore you all—still, I am beginning to feel a little like the matron of an old man's home."

The composer scrutinized the girl gravely for a moment, but there was a flash of humor in his eyes as he echoed, "Old man's home—eh?"

"I hope you don't mind," she exclaimed, a trifle worried; "but remember you insisted—you said, 'out with it!'"

Sewall shook his head heartily. "You've put us where we belong, but we'll show you, my young lady, that there's enough life left in the old boys to keep you from being lonely."

Out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of

Blodgett, standing in impatient but respectful silence at the door.

"Blodgett," he commented, "has a way of slipping in and out like a well-trained ghost, without making as much noise as a breath of air."

"What is it, Blodgett?" asked Marjorie.

"Your father, miss, sent me to tell Mr. Sewall that his cocktail is getting warm."

"Ah, what a calamity," exclaimed the composer, starting up from the piano. "You'll excuse me, Marjorie, or those young dogs will be drinking themselves to death."

In a flash he was gone; and Marjorie was lonely.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LIGHT FROM A DORMER WINDOW.

**H**ALF an hour ago Marjorie had wished to be alone that she might read Walter Nicolls's letter. Alone, now, she drew it forth from its hiding place with feelings so altered that she was scarcely the same girl who had tucked that letter away before and pressed it with an ardent hand.

Now she read it slowly, every word, down to the last avowal, and it did not seem to her that the man who had penned this, her first love-letter, could be the same Walter who had come a few minutes ago—to take her, but only on the wings of her father's fortune.

It was a simple, very youthful, lowly little romance which she had begun to build for herself. Its architecture was poor, but the decorations were hers, and it had seemed—for a brief moment or two—exceedingly real to her. The letter spoke so genuinely to her, contradicting the fall of her humble castle, that

it made more poignant the little tragedy. She realized that she had been mistaken, that the man had failed, but these thoughts did not console her—they made her feel more wretchedly alone than ever. A desire to love and to be loved had been created within her. The vanishing of that dear prospect left her heart unsatisfied.

Slowly she turned with the letter in her hand, and looked not at it, but the manuscript song on the piano. "Out of his heart he builds a home," she murmured.

Walter knew nothing of building such a home. It was the kind of home she would like. Was it just a song? Or was it the ideal of a man who knew? Yes, the man who wrote that song knew! She felt as though he had spoken to her.

Slowly again she turned. This time she went toward the fireplace, and with one last look and a sigh she dropped her letter into the flames. As she watched it writhe and curl into ashes, the tears started from her eyes, but she did not heed them. It was to her a very sad little ceremony, the cremation of her initial love affair.

Presently she became conscious that someone was near her. She looked up, startled, and found Romney standing close beside her.

"W-where did you come from?" she stammered, and daubed at her eyes with a handkerchief.

He looked down at her, quietly, whimsically, as he said, pointing into the fireplace, "I was summoned to you by the spirit of that cremated love-letter!"

Surprised and still crying silently, Marjorie asked: "L-love-letter?"

"It's only love-letters that one burns and cries over."

"I'm not—crying," she protested with an infinitesimal sob, leaving him at the hearth and dropping down on the edge of the davenport.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" He was most contrite, as he followed her.

"At least—not about him!"

"Him?" Romney let himself down cautiously beside her.

"Walter," she explained, with a convulsive exclamation. "He was awfully nice—and—and entertaining—but—" She felt that was enough. Beside she must stop crying. The tiny handkerchief was quite wet by this time.

"I suppose he didn't measure up to standard," suggested Romney.

Marjorie nodded, as she explained, still tearfully:

"So—you—see—I wasn't—crying for him. It—it was my first l-love-letter!"

"But it won't be your last," he encouraged.

"Oh, yes it will." She was quite positive. "My—my heart is—is frost-bitten!"

Romney refused to credit this statement. "If that were so, you would be crying little icicles; but I'm sure they are warm little tears." He observed the inadequacy of the bit of cambric which the girl was employing so industriously. "Have a larger handkerchief!" He whipped one from his pocket and offered it to her as though he were merely passing her a cup of tea.

"Thank you!" Marjorie found it entirely satisfactory. In a moment the tears were dried and their source, pretty thoroughly drained by this time, apparently resolved to hold in reserve what little remained. The girl put out a hand, which Romney promptly took in his and began to stroke soothingly. "I can talk to you," she began anew. "I don't think that I was ever quite sure about Walter. Now I know that I didn't love him."

"You only wanted something to love," he volunteered. "I'll get you a white rabbit with pink eyes. I understand they are quite affectionate."

The girl shook her head, as she smiled, not with-



out some vague sense at least of the humor of her rather pathetic remark: "I want some *one*—not some *thing!*"

But the lawyer felt he was on the right track. The smile indicated as much. "But a tame rabbit, or even a well-behaved bull-pup is much less trouble than a man."

"I am going to order my own menagerie," she said, returning his handkerchief; "but that's not what I want now."

"Whatever you want," he committed himself without reserve, "I'll get it for you. Have you any definite ideas on the subject." A lawyer is a practical sort of person. He never feels safe until he has a bit of a fact to work upon.

"I hadn't, until to-night!" This sudden, direct answer startled Romney. He was up on his feet now and watching Marjorie with mystification in his eyes, as she darted across the room and caught up the manuscript of the song from the piano. "Mr. Sewall brought me a song," she explained, as she wheeled about to him. Walter and his shallowness, even his love-letter, with its strange ring of truth, were forgotten. She had a new interest, and behind it there was unconsciously an intention. She put the song in Romney's hands, with a great deal of satisfaction.

"I thought I heard you singing," he remarked as he adjusted his glasses.

"Oh, it's such a dear song," she enthused. "He wrote the music himself—for me—for Christmas. But the words—the verse—he doesn't know who wrote them. They're about the most wonderful kind of man. Only I'm afraid he doesn't exist!" She finished with a sigh.

"Huh!" ejaculated the lawyer, as, with a patronizing but sympathetic smile, he glanced over the manuscript. Suddenly he pursed his brow, and gave a subdued exclamation of amazement.

"Isn't it too adorable?" Marjorie beamed up at him.

"I've always liked it," he declared laconically, while the girl gazed at him with an expression of puzzlement. "I know the chap who wrote it!"

"You know the chap who wrote it?" Marjorie was quite excited as well as surprised. "Oh—if he should be a—a friend of yours!"

"He—he *was*!" Romney made this remark in a preoccupied fashion, which he finally only explained by saying: "Gad! It's the strangest thing—his song falling into your hands!" He looked from the manuscript to the girl and from the girl toward the window, which faced a bit of lawn—just a patch which



*"Well, in That Shabby Old Place---Where You See the Light, Lives Quintard.  
He Lives Up There, Like Cinderella in the Attic"*





separated the house from the iron railings along the street front.

"Come here!" he commanded gently, taking Marjorie by the elbow and leading her over to the window seat. "Jump up!" He helped to steady her on the cushions, parted the curtains, and pointed to the shabby dwelling that neighbored them. "You see that dreadful old house next door?"

Marjorie remembered. Romney had written, in the course of their long correspondence, a long letter to the girl telling her about that house. "That's where they keep boarders, or lodgers, or something, just to annoy papa because he wouldn't pay a ridiculous price for it— isn't it?" she asked.

"Yes! In that miserable rookery—there's where Quintard lives!"

"Quintard?" She knew no one by that name.

"Anthony Quintard," he expanded. "The lad who wrote your song. He lives up there, like Cinderella, in the attic." He pointed upward, where there was a faint glow to be seen over the edge of the roof, a roof that jambed itself up against the side of the Caner mansion just under their fifth story windows. "You can see the light from his dormer! It's cold and forlorn and lonely up there! I've been in that garret!"

Marjorie flattened her cheek against the casement, and stood there looking up at that glow far above her for a moment or so in silence. "A Cinderella-man!" she finally christened the lone dweller in that attic, as she visualized to herself the wretchedness of its occupant.

Romney left her standing there, went to the piano and set up the song. He was playing it softly, when Marjorie suddenly jumped down from the window-seat and interrupted him. "Why does he live up there? Is he so dreadfully poor?"

"So poor that I don't think he gets enough to eat," answered the lawyer, rising from the piano.

"Oh, Romney, why don't you do something for him?" she demanded.

"He won't let me," returned her old friend warmly. "Young idiot won't take a penny. You never knew anyone so proud as Tony. Once—I offered him a little loan; he bristled up like a porcupine. I've had an awful row with him—just because I paid his landlady a month's rent without his knowing it. It was only a few dollars, but when he heard of it—he sent the money back to me, like a shot—with thanks. Rather tart thanks, too. That was some weeks ago. I haven't dared to visit him since."

"But hasn't he any family?"

"Not even a cat—though I dare say there are mice in that attic. He did have a rich old uncle—stingy, miserable old cuss. Wanted Tony to manufacture talcum powder!"

"Talcum powder?" echoed Marjorie with an exclamation of horror, in which there was much sympathy for the Tony she didn't know, but for whom in her heart she had already found a warm habitation.

"Yes! That was Uncle Peter's idea; but Tony refused—I may say, scorned his offer. Tony wanted to write things!"

"Of course he did!" exclaimed the girl promptly, with the memory of the lad's verses still running through her head.

"As I was about to tell you," Romney went on, "Uncle Peter, general chump and scoundrel—I hope that's strong enough—cut Tony out of his will, and died—yes, died."

"The beast!" Marjorie was indignant.

"I agree with you. Uncle Peter was a throw-back—the only Quintard I didn't like. Gentle folks—dear people. Tony's one of the best of them, and he's nothing but a boy."

Marjorie looked at Romney sternly. "You were horrid to quarrel with him!"



"I didn't quarrel with him," protested the lawyer. "He quarreled with me!"

"It was your fault. You—you weren't tactful—and you must be very—oh, ever so very tactful with anyone so poor and sensitive, and—and lonely." She felt by this time that she knew Tony thoroughly. Such is the power of imagination.

"But he was so silly about it—such a simpleton!"

Marjorie could not endure having even Romney call her Cinderella-man a simpleton. A man who could write such a song as now kept floating through her sub-consciousness was, at the very least reckoning, a genius! She told Romney that he must reform his estimate of the young gentleman in the attic.

"You don't know him!" To defend his position, to prove what a simpleton Tony was, he told her how the youth had absolutely disappeared two years ago—hidden himself like a mole. "For months and months," he elucidated, "I didn't know what had become of him. Then, last spring, I saw that poem, signed by the little idiot, in a magazine. The editor gave me his address."

"Why didn't you make the editor buy a whole lot of his poems?" There was an accusation in the question. It was clear that she considered Romney criminally negligent, as he himself might have put it.



Romney had had some acquaintance with editors. He knew what a hard-headed lot they were, the sort of gods that one hesitates to trifle with. "If I had suggested it, the editor would probably have kicked me out of his office; or, if he were busy at the time, he would have found a ready assistant to propel me expeditiously out of his sanctuary. There are always lots of them aching for just that sort of exercise."

The girl had ceased listening. She wasn't interested in editors any more. But Romney didn't know this.

"He's a gentleman, isn't he?" she asked.

"The editor?" The lawyer was dubious. He thought he might be outside of the office. They often were, he remembered.

"No! The Cinderella-man!"

Romney became serious. "To the tips of his fingers!"

"Then I shall invite him to dinner!" That was settled.

"Charming thought—but he won't accept!"

"Why won't he?" Her persistence reminded him of Caner. She was like the old ruffian, in a certain modified fashion.

"He refused an invitation from me, an old friend. Do you imagine he'll accept one from a stranger?"

Marjorie had forgotten that she only knew Tony vicariously. Now she realized that, of course, Romney was right. She must think of something else. She had been thinking that the young man ought to have a mouse-trap up there, particularly as he had no cat. She hoped he wasn't afraid of mice. She thought men, real men at any rate, were not even afraid of rats. But it wasn't just nice to have mice running about over everything, probably chewing up some of Tony's most precious verses. However, that wasn't really important. What could she do? She was bound to do something, but she must not make the sort of mistake that Romney made, and it was all very difficult and complicated, as she really didn't know Tony.

"I should like to do something for him—well, for Christmas, you know," said Romney, putting into words the idea which had already begun to form itself in Marjorie's own mind.

"Oh, Romney," she cried, "I want to do something for him, too, for Christmas!" She had a feeling of remorse; it swept over her with a little shudder as she thought of the presents—all sorts of things—which her father would probably heap upon her, things that would cost a lot of money and that she wouldn't care for. "And all the time," she said

aloud, "there's that poor, lonely, little Cinderella-man——"

"He isn't little—he's five feet ten and a half, if he's an inch," interposed Romney.

"Please be serious," she commanded. "I can't even smile when I think of his having nothing, while I—oh, Romney," she broke out with a trembling voice, "I can't stand it—I can't stand it! I must do something for him—I must!"

"I'd be very glad if you could think of any way of helping."

Marjorie went back to the window for inspiration's sake. And presently it came to her. The thought delighted her. She would make it all the more delightful by wrapping it in mystery. Perhaps that was necessary. Her father might not approve. So what was the use of letting any one know. When it was done, and she were found out, it wouldn't matter. The good she meant to do would have been accomplished, little Jesuit that she was.

"Romney! I want you to go to him to-morrow—make up with him." This was virtually an order. She, too, was used to being obeyed. "Find out what he needs most. Don't ask him. Look around and see for yourself. Then come back immediately and tell me."

He looked down at her wonderingly. "What's stirring in that funny little head of yours?"

Oh, it was a great project, a real, beautiful adventure, but she couldn't tell even him. No! All she would say was: "I've thought of giving him a Christmas! Oh, Romney, I'll do it—I will do it! Promise me that you'll go—promise me!"

"Of course I promise!"

"That's a dear, old thing!" Then with a second, lively thought, she asked: "Did you ever know a Cinderella-man!"

"Not until I met Tony, and I never would have recognized his title to the name if you hadn't so sagely pointed it out to me."

"I never met one either," she laughed happily, and added with the covetousness of a discoverer: "So let us keep this one all to ourselves—at least for Christmas. He'll be our own, own Cinderella-man!"



## CHAPTER XII.

### HE WROTE THINGS UNDER THE ROOF.

**I**N the tall, lean young man who sat in the cold and forlorn attic, whose dormer window had been the object of so much interest to Marjorie Caner, the observer would have found little change in the two years that had passed since he first climbed those rickety stairs and took possession of that nest under the roof. He was somewhat leaner, somewhat shabbier, but no less hopeful, although it needed no efficiency expert to tell one that a great deal of energy had been expended over that kitchen table without producing a commensurate ratio of profit. The light was still burning steadily in those grey-blue eyes, the lines about his mouth were still marked with ready smiles, and his dark hair with the touch of red in it was still towseled about as though it had never known a brush or comb, as the lad leaned over his "copy," pushing a pencil industriously, his good, square, manly jaw set firmly against disappointment

and failure—two familiar devils, who forever were tapping for admittance, but who had never so far managed to thrust their noses into his workshop.

It was the afternoon of the day before Christmas, the day after Marjorie had arrived from France. Tony, engrossed in his work, appeared to be oblivious to the comfortless nature of his surroundings. It was very cold in the attic. The mournful blue light of a mid-winter afternoon stole through the window, but not clearly, for there was a thick frost on the panes except in spots where the sunbeams had burned a few peepholes.

Through these points of advantage could be seen the heavy mantle of snow on the adjoining room, while in perspective were the rooms, gables and chimneys of Morris Caner's and other residences, together with the tapering spire of a church above its square clock tower.

"Whoof!" ejaculated Tony, putting down his pen and rubbing his numbed fingers. "This is the coldest day yet. How's the register?"

Walking to the middle of the room where a diminutive heat-register was sunk in the floor, he felt over it with his hands.

"A bluff!" he exclaimed. "The only air coming out of that thing was canned at the North Pole."

With a grunt of disgust he turned briskly to a calico curtain hanging from a shelf in a corner, and pulling it aside, brought down from a nail an old Persian dressing-gown, which he slipped on over his coat. He topped this off with a gay-colored but faded turban. Then he looked at himself in a small mirror over the washstand and grinned. Even the bitter cold could not quench Tony Quintard's over-bubbling sense of humor.

"Ah! Here I am! The grand vizier of Azirbjerah! Ready to curse all my enemies, and particularly that infidel dog, the Weather Man. May a Kobold catch him and tickle him to death! This is pretty good—this robe! But my ribs are cold. Ah! Yes! Of course! Paper! That's the thing! There's a lot of warmth in paper."

He took a newspaper from under his table, folded it to a convenient size, so that there were several thicknesses, opened his waistcoat and placed the paper across his chest. Then he buttoned it up and grinned again.

"What do I care for old Winter? He has no terrors for me so long as I can get a paper for a penny! This is one of those hot, sensational sheets, too. I can feel it radiating warmth all through me."

He drew the robe around him and went back to

his chair, squaring his elbows, preparatory to resuming his work. Then he reached for his brier pipe and filled it with tobacco, all the while studying the last page of a manuscript he had turned out. He took up a match, not noticing that it had already been burned out, and tried to strike a light for his pipe.

"What the—oh! I see! Half the time I don't know what I'm doing, I'm so bothered over this darned masterpiece. Well, when it is done, and I get the money for it, I'll take a rest and enjoy my pipe like a Christian."

The pipe was set going, and as Tony Quintard took two or three luxurious pulls at it, he dipped his pen in the ink and wrote a few words. Then he crossed them out and uttered a half-audible ejaculation of annoyance.

"That won't do. It's rot! Let me see. I'll have to change that!"

He got up and marched to the window. Having rubbed off some of the frost, he gazed out without seeing anything more than the ideas cavorting through his head.

"By Jove!" Apparently an attractive idea crossed his vision. He hurried back to the table and settled down to write at lightning speed, afraid he might lose the thought before it was nailed to the paper. He



was absorbed in his work, his head low over the paper, and his pipe, neglected, clenched in his teeth, when there came a knock at the door below.

"Go away!" growled Tony, without looking up.

The entrance to his attic was by way of a stairway that came through a trap in the floor, protected by a wooden railing on three sides. The knock floated up from the door at the foot of these stairs.

When Tony grunted "Go away!" the only result was a repetition of the knock, a little louder than before.

"Go—a-w-a-y!" Tony's growl deepened with exasperation.

"It's most important, sir."

It was a meek, husky voice that ascended to the scribbler. It sounded as if its owner were even then climbing the worn stairs.

"Nothing is important except my work," insisted Tony. Then added with humorous exasperation: "Confound you! I just got a wireless from inspiration, and you break in. Now you've aroused my curiosity. So come up—and annoy me."

"I'm coming, sir." Primrose, as down at the heels but as cheerful as ever, appeared through the trap in his usual apologetic manner. Within two stairs of the top he paused to cough hoarsely.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Quintard, for bothering you. But——"

"Don't stand down there like a bear in a pit," encouraged Tony.

"Thank you, sir," was the reply. The old man came to the top and leaned wearily over the rail, for the climb had rather taken the wind out of him. "I wouldn't have thought of botherin' you, only——"

"Primrose," interrupted Tony, with ironic toleration, "eliminate the preface and unwind your tale."

"Well, sir," explained the man-who-had-seen-better-days, "he's waiting below—a gentleman."

"You're quite sure he's a gentleman?"

"Oh, yes, sir. He has on a fur coat."

Tony put his pipe on the table, shivered a little, and gazed speculatively at his servitor.

"Attention, Primrose! Could you—er—get me the coat and leave the gentleman?"

"I'm afraid not, sir!" This with a phantom smile. "The gentleman is wearin' the coat."

"He knew where he was coming," grunted Tony. "Is it Cooke or Peary?"

The allusion rolled harmlessly off Jerry Primrose's mentality. He surmised that it was a joke of some kind, but he didn't recognize it. So he answered, with

a noncommittal widening of the mouth: "I couldn't say, sir."

Primrose had been a valet for many years, and the instinct of the efficient body-servant was in him always. He observed that Tony wore slippers, and that his shoes were scattered about the room. So he picked them up one by one and handed them to Tony.

"Infernal nuisance!" complained the youth as he took off the slippers and gave them to Primrose. "Got to put my shoes on just to be bored by somebody."

"And he is somebody, sir—he came in a motor car, with a swell chauffeur. The chauffeur is wearin' a fur coat, too!"

"Then how could you tell which was the gentleman?" asked Tony solemnly.

"The gentleman wears the fur inside, the chauffeur outside," was the laconic reply. Then, with a dismal shake of the head, the old man added: "*You* used to wear yours inside, sir."

It was evident that the recollection of happier fortune, both for himself and Tony, was weighing heavily on the spirits of Primrose. He choked back a sob, braced himself with a quiver of bent shoulders, took a shabby overcoat from where it lay on a trunk, shook it and brushed it down with his hand solicitously.

"It is a well-known economic fact, Primrose," remarked Tony, as he laced up his second shoe, "that you can't wear your fur coat and eat it, too. What's your opinion about our fur-lined visitor?"

Primrose was silent until he had hung the shabby overcoat in a corner, and, picking up a hat from the floor where it had been carelessly flung, placed it on a shelf. After some consideration, he answered:

"I think it would be safe to let him up, sir."

"Then bring him up."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, by the way," called Tony, as the old man took a step down the stairs. "I could do with a whiff of heat up here. Suppose you go down to the uttermost depths of this habitation and sneak a spoonful of anthracite into the furnace. But don't let the Great She-Bear catch you. She might raise my rent."

"So she might, sir. Thank you, sir," returned Primrose as he disappeared.

"I'll have to dress for company, I suppose," mumbled Tony. He took off the Persian robe and hid it behind the curtain. The turban he laid on the shelf. "It's a bore—especially when I am so busy."

There was a short pause, during which Tony took up some sheets of his manuscript and studied them thoughtfully. He was completely engrossed when



footsteps on the stairs attracted his attention. He went to the trap, and seeing who it was, held out his hand cordially.

"Hello, Romney!"

"Hello, Tony!"

As they shook hands warmly, the young man said: "My apologies for keeping you waiting! I didn't know it was you."

"My fault," returned Romney Evans. "I should have sent up my name. Only, I was afraid you wouldn't see me."

"Nonsense! We understand each other—now. Awfully good of you to come again. Give me your hat and stick. I'd ask you to take off your coat, but I'm afraid you are not used to these high altitudes."

"It is rather like out-of-doors here," confessed the lawyer.

"Ah, you notice that? The effect?" breezed Tony. "Good! Some people like to sleep out-of-doors. I like to work out-of-dors. But that isn't practical at this season of the year, so I managed to have it cool up here. Keeps my brain active. What does the mercury say?" he added, consulting an old advertising thermometer on the wall. No, it's all right. I was afraid my man would make it too hot for me. He

has a passion for heat. Have the chair. It's the one I have been sitting in. It is still fairly warm."

Tony bustled about, making his guest as comfortable as possible. Romney watched him, dashing to and fro in his icy room, affecting to be entirely happy with his surroundings, and cheerful as ever he was when, as a boy, he had no more on his mind than a bit of doggerel.

"A Cinderella-man, indeed," thought Romney. "Have a cigarette, Tony?"

He held out a gold case. Tony extracted a cigarette with an off-hand "Thanks," adding: "Haven't smoked a cigarette in days. Have to smoke a pipe when I'm working."

Their cigarettes were going, with Tony on the big trunk, nursing his knee and puffing with genuine enjoyment, while Romney occupied the chair, when the latter remarked casually:

"By the way, I have a friend—a neighbor of yours—who's taken a sudden interest in your work—quite smitten with those verses of yours, 'Out of His Heart He Builds a Home.' "

"Neighbor? Who is it? Perhaps I know him by sight."

"It isn't a *he*—it's a *she*."

"Ah! Enter romance, very early in the first chap-

ter," observed Tony, between puffs. "Now, don't spoil it by giving me facts. Let me improvise. It's the Veiled Princess!"

"Who's the Veiled Princess?"

"Who? Why, the little billionairess. She arrived next door, last night, in the gloaming."

"So you've heard about her?"

Tony waved his cigarette expansively toward the staircase down the trap.

"My journal brings me the fashionable news of the street."

"Your journal?"

"Primrose, my man. You noticed him. He's my journal—my court gazette—morning and evening edition—and occasionally an extra. Most reliable. Serves me in the dual capacity of journal and valet, whether I will have it or not. His real business in life is butling and janitoring for the Great She-Bear."

"The Great She-Bear?" repeated Romney.

"Landlady. I can't call her anything but what I've just said. She's a terror—a grizzly. You noticed her the last time you were here. I'm deathly afraid of her. I try to keep my door locked. She's likely to come in and eat me some night, just because I've forgotten to pay the rent."

"But you were talking of the Veiled Princess," Romney reminded him.

"Oh, yes! My journal informs me that she arrived last night in her gasoline chariot, heavily veiled. He also told me that she is the only daughter of the king of commerce next door."

"Wouldn't you like to meet her?" asked Romney.

"Got her in your pocket?" returned Tony, carelessly.

"Not to-day."

"Too bad! Too bad! But, after all, what have I to do with veiled princesses?"

"Nothing. That's the trouble. You write about them—probably in the most familiar sort of way. But you don't know them. Think how much better you could write about them if you knew one—just one."

"You are mistaken, my dear Romney," laughed Tony. "I can imagine them much better than they are. Once upon a time, in my days of affluent slavery, I knew a princess. I had to entertain her for almost an hour. It makes me ache to think of it."

"But, you forget. The Veiled Princess likes your song."

"You're a sly old dog, Romney. But I'm impervious to flattery."



"But when a charming young woman expresses a desire to meet you——"

"The only safe procedure is to scurry up to the turret of your castle and bolt the door after you," finished Tony.

"Not a bit of it, young man! You must not think she's the sort that would run after you. No, indeed!"

"Thank heaven! I am saved!" ejaculated Tony, with mock fervor.

Romney Evans turned on him in disgust.

"I should think," he snorted, "that when you are told there is a young person next door who appreciates and is interested in your work, you'd be only too glad to have a chance to meet her."

But this did not disturb Tony's calm attitude.

"I'm sure it's very friendly and delightful of you and the Veiled Princess to think of me. I am flattered, and I hope you will convey my sincere thanks to her. But, having forgotten my party manners, as well as mislaid my party clothes, I must regretfully and respectfully decline your cordial invitation. With the compliments of the season, I remain, your obedient servant, Anthony Quintard!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN EMMISSARY FROM A PRINCESS.

WHILE Tony expressed himself in this rather highfalutin fashion, trying to render it apparent, beyond peradventure, that he did not care to make the acquaintance of the Veiled Princess, no matter how charming she might be, Romney Evans stalked about the attic, taking a mental inventory of its shabby details. The evidences of poverty that met his eye on all sides caused him to boil within at the young man's obstinacy.

"Tony, you're a jackass!" he rasped.

"The very words of my late, but not lamented, uncle," was the cheerful response.

"What's the use of your freezing to death in this miserable garret?"

"But, Romney, I'm *not* freezing to death. I'm doing a most important piece of work—or I was, until you so politely interrupted me."

"Huh! I doubt its importance."

"Oh, say not so—say not so!"

Tony made this protest in a sort of chant. It irritated his visitor into a burst of expostulation.

"You should be living comfortably—respectably  
——"

"Respectably?" cried Tony, in pretended astonishment. "What do you call this? Why, it's the most moral lodgery in New York. 'The Great She-Bear' is a Puritan of the most violent type. Only last week she cast out a perfectly good stenographer from the floor below just because her alleged brother called on a Saturday evening."

"You know what I mean. You should, and could, be living among people of your own kind, if you would only accept a certain position that I have waiting for you——"

"In a pickle factory?" jeered the poet. "Thank you—but no."

"In a broker's office, at a good salary!" countered the lawyer, hotly.

Tony deliberately stalked over to the register and stooped so that he could spread his two hands close over the grating. He looked at Romney with a quizzical smile—which faded, however, as his words became more earnest.

"I thank you, but I wouldn't take it at any price.

Why bring up the question, anyway? I had that out with you once. Don't let us start cussing each other again. You can't convince me any more than I can make you understand that I must do the thing that's in me to do—without compromise. Otherwise, I'm a failure."

"I can't see that you're making much of a success, as it is," was Romney's rejoinder.

"No," assented Tony, slowly. "No!" He was hurt, but he quickly threw off his feeling of depression and declared with decision: "But I am not a failure yet—and I won't be! It would take more than you're saying so to shake my faith in myself."

For a few moments Romney Evans gazed at the young man with affectionate pity. At last he picked up his hat and stick from the washstand, where Tony had placed them, and laid a hand on the young man's shoulder.

"I'm sorry, Tony," he said, softly. "I didn't come up here to hurt you. I thought that perhaps I could be the means of bringing a new friend into your life—the Veiled Princess. She's a dear thing. I even hoped that you two might—might grow to care for each other."

"What?" Tony wheeled about, amazed, almost indignant.



"Yes! Why not?" retorted Romney, warmly. "You are the only man I know who's good enough for her."

The youth smiled and laid a hand on his friend's shoulder. "It's very decent of you to say that, Romney. But you know I have the utmost contempt for men who marry rich girls. It's a kind of prostitution. That's what it is. Your self-respect for a meal ticket."

Romney held out his hand and Tony grasped it heartily.

"You see that—my point of view—don't you, Romney?"

"That's all right! I understand!"

"I knew you would. Well, when you're around this way again, drop up." He laughed whimsically, propelling his visitor to the stairs. "And, oh—my compliments and thanks to the Princess."

"I'll deliver them at once," promised Romney, as he went down into the pit, only pausing at the bottom to send back a cheerful: "So long, old boy!"

"Merry Christmas, old top!" called Tony, after him.

"Same to you!"

As the door banged, the smile with which he had hurled the compliments of the Yuletide season after

his boyhood's friend faded from Tony's face. He sighed involuntarily and huddled down on the old trunk, his chin in his hand.

"A failure! *Am* I a failure?"

Then came a knock at the door. But Tony did not heed. Drumming on his brain, as it seemed, was the monotonously recurring query: "Am I a failure? Am I a failure?" He could hear nothing else.

Neither did he see Jerry Primrose's faded countenance with the moist eyes which seemed ever on the verge of weeping, cautiously rising above the level of the trap. It was only when the wheezy voice was raised in reproachful sympathy that he raised his head and saw that his faithful attendant was gazing at him in sorrowful apprehension.

"Bless m' soul, sir!" exclaimed Primrose. "You ain't gone and got the willies again, have you?" He came up the remaining stairs, and continued, with something like a sob: "It is the willies. I was afraid you had 'em. Oh, Mr. Quintard! What I thinks—"

"Shut up, you old cry-baby!" interrupted Tony, arousing himself and smiling. "I never felt better in my life! Here," he went on, as he strode over to the table and looked at his pile of manuscript, "are you any judge of libretto?"

"I might be, if I knew what it was," replied Primrose, with reserve.

"It's a libretto. That's the book of an opera—the words."

"You don't say, sir!"

"In grand opera they are sung. In light opera—occasionally."

"I saw an operry once," murmured Primrose, reminiscently. "The devil was in it."

"And there's a devil in mine—a charming, romantic devil! But he's housebroken in the last act."

Primrose was awestruck. "You, sir, are writin' of an operry?"

"Verily! And I tell you, in confidence, that I have burst many a button in the effort to write something original. It was to be a masterpiece—but now I wonder! It was to have worked the miracle for me! And it shall!" He picked up several sheets of his manuscript from the table and fanned them with his fingers under the old servitor's blue nose. "Primrose, do you see that? It's going to bring us ten thousand dollars! Do you understand? Ten thousand dollars!"

Primrose, saddened as he was by hard times, and with nerves roughened to a burr edge by constantly grinding against the temperament of the Great She-

Bear below stairs, had not lost his sense of humor. The sense was primitive. But, such as it was, it remained to him, and he grinned slowly as Tony spoke grandiloquently of ten thousand dollars. That was a joke that Primrose could appreciate. It had the odor of fabulous wealth. What more could a joke require?

"Is that all?" he asked, the grin assuring Tony that his sally was appreciated.

"Huh!" grunted the author. "I see the flicker of incredulousness in your kindly but watery eye, and I don't blame you. Ten thousand dollars! It's fabulous!"

"Very likely, sir." Primrose was noncommittal.

"I assure you it is!" Tony went on. "Come hither, unbeliever! See! Every page of this manuscript of mine is worth not less than fifty dollars."

"I'm afraid you've something worse than the wil-lies now, sir," returned Primrose, becoming serious. "You know, fifty dollars is——"

"Still unconvinced?" said Tony. "Wait a moment."

From under the ink bottle he drew a clipping from a newspaper, which he opened and placed in the other's hand.

"If you'll read that, my heretical friend, it may enlighten you."



To Primrose reading was more than a mere incident. It was a rite, which must be approached with certain ceremonies, all in regular order, and with due regard to the importance of the proceeding.

To begin with, there were his spectacles. These precious articles were kept in a case at the bottom of a cavern inside his coat. They were tamped down with a large red-yellow-and-blue handkerchief, which he found more convenient than the ordinary small white ones in more common usage.

He fished out the handkerchief, shook it free and passed it across his brow. Then he reached for the glasses. They had a way of sinking to an almost inaccessible corner of the deep pocket, whence they could be extracted only with paralytic contortions, accompanied by sundry grunts and muttered imprecations.

"Come on now!" he apostrophized them sternly. "I *know* you're there, and I'm goin' to have you out if it takes a leg. Ah! There they come! I knowed it! They couldn't fool *me*."

Wiping the steel-rimmed glasses took up another two or three minutes—during which Tony read a page of his opera, with a gratified smile.

"Now, sir, I'm ready," announced Primrose, at last.

He held the clipping close to his face and laboriously spelled it out. As he perused it, his humid eyes widened and his loose-hung mouth worked convulsively. Clearly he was astonished. The whole thing was beyond his ordinary ken.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he blurted out at last. "And this here opory of yours is goin' to get the prize?"

"Such is our hope," was Tony's off-hand reply, as he took back the clipping.

"Ten thousand dollars!" murmured Primrose, awe-stricken. "Would you let me look at it, sir?"

"The opera? Certainly!"

With the libretto in his hands, the old man began to read aloud, with a judicial air, by chance for an opening striking some stage directions:

"The Caliph looks at her with profound admiration. She lowers her head, but lets her eyes fly up at him through the top of her lids.' "

Jerry stopped reading, and stared at Tnoy as if he thought the young man must be crazy. Tony replied to his look by saying with conviction:

"It *can* be done. Like this."

He let his head fall to one side, in a coquettish manner, at the same time rolling up his eyes at his staring inquisitor.

"Um! Do you think a young woman would ever look like that?"

"Of course she would. At least, this young woman would. Go ahead. Read some more."

"'Caliph, your eyes illuminate the path to my soul's dark chamber.' 'He repeats the serenade.'" It was Greek to him. "So that's a opery book? And it's goin' to get you ten thousand dollars?"

"Without a doubt," answered Tony, taking the manuscript from him. "The only difficulty is to get the job done in time. It's just eight days until January first. I've got to work like the devil. That means the consumption of much kerosene! We must consider the oil question."

"We can't work on oil, sir. That gentleman friend of yours—him in the fur coat—didn't happen to lend you a fiver, or somethin', did he?"

"He's not a banker, my dear Primrose. Besides, what do we want with money? We paid the rent last week, and lived in wantonness for three days on that sonnet! If I can turn out a sonnet—and sell it—every seven days, we shall live in affluence."

"But you ain't wrote no sonnet since that one, and you haven't paid this week's rent! As for the thing you call the 'larder,' there's nothin' in it."

"What an old cheer-monger you are! But never

mind! We shall pull through! Let's see! What have we left? Ah! The trunk! Primrose, we've eaten everything in it. Why not eat the trunk itself?"

"It wouldn't pay to cart it away, sir." He gave the battered bit of luggage a kick of contempt.

"Perhaps you're right. Well, let's have a look around. There must be something negotiable that we've overlooked."

"Here's a wes kitt, sir," suddenly announced Primrose. "It's that fancy one you used to wear when—"

"Where is it?" interrupted Tony, snatching the article which the old man had discovered in a drawer. "A find! A find!" he cried enthusiastically, as he waved the waistcoat over his head. Then sobering down a little, he spread it out. At once a cry of dismay came from Primrose.

"There's a big ink-spot on it, sir."

"What? A spot? Ah, yes, I remember. Out, damned spot! I did it with a fountain-pen that I carried in the upper pocket. It leaked, as most fountain-pens do. I've never carried one since."

"You haven't got the pen, have you?" asked Primrose, eagerly. "We might raise something——"

"No. Unfortunately, in a moment of anger, I threw it away. But, see here," he went on, as he



hastily put on the waistcoat. "With the coat buttoned, the spot doesn't show."

"What would be the good of a nice vest like that, sir, if you couldn't wear your coat open?" There was no replying to that interrogation. Tony threw the waistcoat in a corner as Primrose, investigating the washstand drawer, cried out:

"Here's something more likely. Looks as how it might be gold."

He had found a small gold locket among the rubbish in the drawer and held it out to Tony in the palm of his hand. The young man glanced at it, saw what it was, and instantly snatched it away.

"No, no!" he shouted, in sudden anger.

"Why? It's gold, ain't it? You'd better leave me soak it. What's the good of it kicking around your drawer there?"

"It's a lot of good," came the rejoinder, in a pre-occupied tone. "Good luck, I mean."

"It ain't brought you much luck as I can see," grumbled Primrose.

"But it will—it will!" said Tony, half to himself. "And even if it shouldn't, there are some things I can't eat."

"Well, it would bring three or four dollars, maybe—enough to keep you goin' till the op'ry's done."

In way of reply Tony opened the locket and held it out for inspection. When the steel-rimmed spectacles had been duly adjusted, Primrose looked closely at the picture in the locket, and said, softly:

"It's your mother. I never seen her. But you're the spittin' image of her!" The tears came to his eyes.

Tony patted him gently on the back, and taking possession of the locket, said with an affectionate smile: "Don't cry about her—she wasn't your mother."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A BANK BALANCE.

**T**HERE was a short silence, during which Primrose sniffed into the large, many-colored handkerchief, while Tony gazed, with misty eyes, upon the beloved face in the locket. He was recalling how Romney Evans had given the locket to him after his mother's death, and how his old friend had told the boy that she would like him always to keep it, in memory of his father, as well as of herself. He had worn it on his watch-chain so long as he had one. When watch and chain had gone their way to the pawnbroker's he had put the locket in the drawer for safety—and forgotten it.

"Still sniffing?" he demanded suddenly of Primrose.

"I can't help thinkin' what your mother'd be thinkin', lookin' down on her son—a gentleman—an' him goin' to work on his opery on a empty stummick," was the mournful reply as he put away his handkerchief.

"It would be much worse if I were going to work on an empty head," rejoined Tony. "Now trot along. That thistledowny, evanescent thing we call inspiration is hovering—signalling to what I please to call my genius."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!" returned Primrose—the well-trained, self-effacing body-servant coming to the surface through his shabbiness, as it had an intermittent habit of doing. "Oh, I beg your pardon, sir. I have a letter I forgot to give you."

The large handkerchief had to be removed laboriously from his pocket, and he brought forth from below a business-like looking letter.

"It came in the last mail, sir. That's what I came up for—to give it to you. Only——"

"From the Fulton National Bank, eh?" exclaimed Tony. "Once upon a time, Primrose, I had funds—money, real money—in that bank! All I had to do to get it was to write a check. I wonder what——"

He opened the envelope and glanced at the letter-head. The old servant watched him, blinking respectfully.

"This seems to be from the cashier. He begins very affectionately. 'Dear sir: You will understand that it is a rule with this bank to carry no accounts which do not maintain an average balance of five hun-



dred dollars or over. For the past twenty-one months your balance has been three dollars and seventeen cents. Kindly close your account at your earliest convenience by withdrawing your balance, and oblige—'Ah!' shouted Tony, joyfully, "I have a balance to my credit of three-seventeen! Do you get that, Primrose? What time is it?"

He rushed to the window and looked out at the church clock. Primrose was no less excited.

"Do you mean there's three dollars and seventeen cents of yours in the bank, sir?"

"Yes. A fortune! A fortune! It's ten minutes to three. Call me a taxi! No! no! I mean, get my overcoat! Where's my hat? Banks close at three, on the dot."

"Here's your things, sir," said Primrose, bringing the coat and hat from the curtained recess which Tony used as a wardrobe. "You'll have to hurry, sir."

He helped the young man into his frayed overcoat and handed the disreputable hat to him with a low bow—such as it had been his delight to bestow when as a valet in the old days he had sent his patron out immaculately attired from hat to shoe, and could be honestly proud of the sartorial *tout ensemble*.

"Good! We shall have a feast to-morrow—a

feast, my good Primrose! What is to-morrow? Christmas! We shall dine in state! Elijah had his ravens—Quintard has his bankers!”

For a few moments after Tony had dashed down the stairs and slammed the door, Jerry Primrose stood looking down the trap, while two tears ran down his poor old blue-veined nose and splashed upon the uncarpeted floor.

“Nothin’ can knock the ginger out o’ him!”

Following his instinct, the old man moved about the attic, making it as tidy as he could. He smoothed the blanket on the gloucester hammock that hung at one side of the room, and patted the pillow affectionately. Then he went to the table, and very carefully, so as not to disturb the papers, brushed up the spilled tobacco, placed the brier pipe, the pens and the pencil in a row, at right-angles with the large inkstand, and stared down interestedly at the manuscript of the opera, without venturing to touch it.

“Ten thousand dollars!” he murmured. “An’ all for just that writin’! There’s a lot of blots on it, too. I wonder whether they’ll take anything off for them, or whether he’ll get the full ten thousand anyhow.”

His meditations were interrupted by the sudden appearance of a large dark woman, middle-aged, with the shadow of a mustache and glittering, beady black

eyes, who had come up the trap. She was untidy, musty, but well-fed-looking, with a square jaw, and a set of strong but irregular teeth. Her malevolent gaze fastened itself upon the shrinking servant and in a voice like a man's, growled at him:

"So, this is where you're loafing, you good-for-nothing lump!"

"No, mum!" protested Primrose, trying to be brave under her accusing glare. "I wasn't loafin'. I was only tidyin' up a bit after Mr. Quintard."

"Oh, you were?" she sneered, as she came up the remaining stairs and stood so near to him that he seemed to feel her aggressiveness as a tangible thing. "Do I pay you for foolin' around up here, or are you supposed to work for me?"

"I—I don't know mum, I was——"

"Yon don't know? Well, I'll tell you! Once for all, I don't pay nobody nothin' for what I don't get."

She folded a pair of grimy, bare arms, muscular as a prizefighter's, across her wide chest, and looked at Primrose with an expression that quite warranted Tony's description of her as "the Great She-Bear."

When Tony had engaged the attic she had informed him that her name was "Mrs. Bulger." But he preferred his own picturesque appellation, adopted

as he came to know her charming ways. He had almost forgotten that she had any other.

Primrose quite agreed with Tony that she had many of the attributes of a grizzly bear, as he had observed them in menageries and read of them in books, and though he never spoke of her himself as the Great She-Bear, he chuckled enjoyingly whenever Tony used the term. Just now, without the support of Tony's presence, he felt entirely at her mercy.

"I—I didn't think you'd mind, mum," he stammered.

"You've got another think comin' to you," was her retort, as unfolding her arms, she brought down one huge hand into the palm of the other with a slap that made him jump. "If any of my roomers wants you to clean up for 'em, they've got to settle first with me."

"Mr. Quintard would settle, most cheerful—if he could," declared Jerry. "He's got a beautiful disposition, mum."

"Beautiful is as beautiful pays," she snapped. "That's my motto. And what I want to know is, what do you get for waitin' on him hand and foot?"

"Well, mum," hesitated Primrose, after a short pause. "It's like this: Did you ever get very close, in a confidential position, to a real gentleman?"



"I should say not," replied the Great She-Bear, with a sniff of virtuous indignation.

"I didn't think you had," was the other's dry rejoinder. "Well, mum, I was brung up in a gentleman's family, from scullery boy to butler, in the old country, and I served me time, too, as a gentleman's gentleman."

The Great She-Bear burst into a shout of sarcastic laughter.

Primrose thought it the most mirthless sound he had ever heard.

"You? A gentleman's gentleman" she echoed, scornfully.

"Yes, mum. And there's the point I'm makin'. It means a lot to me to be close to one of me own ag'in. Just to hear a gentleman's voice—to have him treat me like a human bein' an' a friend—still keepin' me in my place, mum."

"Is that all you get out of him?"

"It's more than enough for me."

"He never gives you a tip, and you call him a gentleman?" Her scorn was profound.

"You don't judge his sort by their tips," replied Jerry, soberly. "Why it's an honor to serve him."

"But you're too high and mighty to clean my cns-

pidors," she growled, very much like the she-bear Tony called her. "Well, you'll begin on them to-day. I'll learn you. Come on now! You can start on the china one in the parlor. And mind you don't break it! Take one chip out of it and I'll——"

She did not finish. It was not necessary. She clenched one of her mighty fists and extended it in Primrose's direction. But the spirit of rebellion arose in him, and, as the Great She-Bear started down into the pit, he grumbled loudly enough for her to hear:

"I wasn't engaged to clean cuspidors."

"What's that?" she demanded. "Well, if you want a better job, perhaps you know you can get it. But you can take it from me that it isn't every landlady who's goin' to put up with an old rum-hound like you."

He put up his two hands weakly, as if to ward off a blow, and the ready tears trickled down his nose. There was a sob in his tones as he answered, brokenly: "I ain't touched a drop for a week, Mr. Quintard's reformin' me."

"If he knew how you got fired from one place to another, because you couldn't keep sober!" was the Great She-Bear's parting snarl, as she went on down the stairs.

"Mr. Quintard knows all about me," he retorted, following her down. "But he never reminds me how I came to be what I am. That's the difference between you and a gentleman."

Anybody within earshot of the kitchen regions, far down in the bowels of the melancholy old lodging-house, might have been edified by a continuance of the discussion, with the Great She-Bear in the ascendant so far as vituperative violence was concerned, but Primrose holding his own in the way of logic and sound argument.

The colloquy lasted for ten minutes or more. Then it was brought to an end by the lady ordering the old man to "git at them cuspidors—or else get out."

"All the same," Primrose muttered, as he began on the first cuspidor, "she ain't no gentleman, and never will be!"

## CHAPTER XV.

### A CHRISTMAS FAIRY.

FOR some minutes after the disappearance of the Great She-Bear and Jerry Primrose the attic remained empty. It is barely possible that the Spirit of Christmas may have peeped through the window since it was certainly abroad that afternoon, and it may have been that the poetic inspiration which Tony Quintard had declared was hovering about him lingered to await his return. But human presence there was none, until——

The dormer window opened gently a little way and a girl's face, framed by a dainty grey hood, appeared in the opening. She had been looking through the glass before opening the window. She wanted to make sure that the place was untenanted.

It was Marjorie Caner who thus burglariously entered the sanctum of the poet, and her movements were as stealthy as though she had come to rob.

Very pretty she seemed, in her "liberty cloak" of



soft gray material, with its frilled hood, from which tendrils of soft hair escaped and turned themselves into little snares on her white forehead. Except for a small apron and a violet chiffon scarf, she was all in gray, including slippers and hose. Her color had been heightened by the eager winter air, and if there is such a thing as a Christmas rose, that is what she looked like.

"A Cinderella-man," she murmured softly, "but he is not here."

A tinkling nervous laugh came to her red lips, as she ventured further into the attic, and, with swift glances, satisfied herself that for the moment she would not be discovered.

She tripped up to the window and went out on the snow-covered roof. In a moment she was back, this time carrying a large market basket, with wicker lids. Obviously it was heavy, for only with an effort did she lift it over the sill and place it on the floor in the middle of the room.

"My! How cold it is!" she whispered. "No wonder! I've left the window open."

Hastily closing the casement, she ran about the attic, peeping into every corner. The trap, with the stairs, interested her particularly, as being the direction from which she might expect interruption.

"I think I shall be able to hear their footsteps," she reassured herself. "Then, before they get up the stairs, I can make my exit by the window. Oh, dear, it seems to be colder every instant! It isn't because I did not close the window at once, either. There isn't a bit of heat in this register. Poor Cinderella-man! Romney told me his attic was cold, but I did not understand how cold a room could be when there is no fire, or steam heat, or anything. I wish I could have some of the steam from our house turned in here!"

Marjorie noted more than the frigidity. She saw that the furniture was mean and scanty, and that the room had a generally forlorn aspect which chilled her to the soul.

"The Cinderella-man is a poet," she said, half aloud. "I think he will appreciate a few Christmas decorations."

From her basket she took a large bunch of holly and English ivy, and, with deft fingers, hung branches of the red berries, and the deep-green, shiny leaves, wherever there was a convenient projection.

"That warms it up," she remarked, in a satisfied way. "Now for the mistletoe! I wonder whether

the Cinderella-man thinks about the old-fashioned significance of mistletoe! If he doesn't, he is not the kind of poet I think he is, from his song."

She brought a spray of the mystic plant, its white berries twinkling like small stars among the olive-hued leaves, and hung it on the railing around the stair opening. She laughed softly.

"It will be almost above his head as he comes up. But, if there is no girl, what difference will it make to him where it hangs? Now for the more important part of what I have to do."

She hummed the song she had sung the evening before, with Albert Sewall playing the accompaniment. But her voice was very low now; it would hardly have been audible to anybody in an adjoining room—had there been such a one.

"'He rules no realm! He's more than king! A woman's joy his harvesting!'" she sang, as she busied herself taking things from her capacious market basket.

And what unexpected things they were, to be sure!

First came a small white tablecloth. Looking at the table with a speculative eye, she saw that it would be dangerous to move any of the loose sheets of manuscripts that littered it all over.

"I couldn't put my cloth there," she reflected. "I

should have to take away his papers, and if I did, no doubt he'd pursue me to the ends of earth to punish me for the sacrilege. No; something else must be done. There's a trunk. It's nearly as high as the table, and has almost as large a top. When the cloth is on, it won't look at all badly. That's what I'll do."

Indeed, when the glistening white damask was spread on the travel-battered old trunk, it looked as inviting as if it had been a polished mahogany table, instead of the dented, bruised, rusty iron-bound old voyager it really was. A minute before it had been a veritable tramp of a trunk. Set off by the white cloth, it became as respectable as a clergyman in a new surplice.

Having spread the cloth, Marjorie brought from her basket jars of jam and marmalade, a smoked sausage tied with a red ribbon, a cold chicken festively decorated, a Christmas cake brave in its icing and red-sugar holly berries, a loaf of graham bread, a crock of baked beans, a tea-caddy, spirit lamp, small copper kettle, plate of dainty sandwiches, and a battalion of golden-brown cookies.

"There! That isn't so bad for a Christmas Eve picnic," she purred, delightedly. "I hope he will like at least some of the things I have brought. Now for the tea!"



Kettle in hand, she bustled over to the washstand and poured in some water from the pitcher. Then, taking a match from the table, she lighted the alcohol lamp and set the kettle over it.

"Let me see! Where did I put those—ah, here they are!"

She had been fumbling in the basket, her pretty brows raised in anxiety, until she placed her fingers on what she sought. It was a box of Turkish cigarettes. These she set upon the table by the side of the brier pipe.

The next article extracted from that wonderful basket was a pink-and-white silk comfortable, all lace and be-ribboned. She spread this upon the hammock, and very gay it looked when arranged to her satisfaction.

"Now, Mr. Cinderella-man, I don't know what you will say, but I think the effect of that counterpane is excellent. It not only looks well, but it suggests warmth and dreamless slumber. People talk about dreamless sleep as if it were a most desirable thing," she went on musingly. "Yet, might it not be better to have dreams, if they are pleasant ones? Now, a poet, I should think, would be likely to dream——"

She broke off abruptly, and running to the railing

at the stairs, leaned over and listened. Her heart was beating wildly, and her breath came and went so fast that she felt as if she would suffocate.

"Good gracious! He's coming!"

Gathering her cloak about her, she ran to the window and tried to pull it open. But the frost had wedged it tight. She could not make it move. Panic-stricken, she looked about for a corner in which to hide.

"Oh, isn't this too dreadful!"

She darted behind the curtain where Tony kept what remained of his clothes, and pulled the curtain straight in front of her. It was better than being out in the room. But it was not perfect as a hiding-place, either, for the curtain did not quite reach the floor and the tips of her grey shoes showed underneath.

Hardly was Marjorie hidden when the door below was flung open with a crash, followed by the rapid footsteps of somebody coming up the stairs. She heard the somebody whistling, as if he were in good spirits. Then he stopped whistling to utter a most emphatic "Good Lord!"

The newcomer was Tony Quintard, and she knew he had just caught sight of the appetizing spread on the trunk.

In his arms he carried, besides a flat, oblong parcel, a large paper bag with a loaf of bread sticking out of it, a can of soup, and some other comestibles of a delicatessen aspect. At sight of the trunk he dropped his burden unceremoniously on the floor. He was thunderstruck—literally! He stood there with mouth agape for fully a moment before he asked himself with comic bewilderment: "Is this a mirage—or what? Am I out of my senses?" To test the reality of the feast spread before his amazed eyes, whose evidence he doubted, he sniffed at the chicken. "My eyes might deceive me," he concluded, "but my nose—never! No one would dream the savor of that chicken! It is real, even if everything else on the trunk were imagination."

He twisted a leg off the chicken and took a bite. A rapturous expression crept over his face. He attacked the chicken leg vigorously. Between bites he ejaculated:

"It isn't everybody that can roast a chicken. The genius who cooked this fowl knew how to control his fire so that it would give precisely the amount of heat required at every stage of the operation—not a degree too much. Such a cook deserves the *cordon bleu*, and I hope he has it. Men have received half a dozen royal decorations for achievements less emi-

ment than this. My honorable but unknown chef, I salute you!"

He waved the drumstick and bowed low to an imaginary personage. It was while he leaned forward, his left hand over his heart, that his eyes fell upon the kettle, gaily singing above the alcohol lamp.

Now he was wonder-struck. Singing kettles were no more to be encountered in Tony's attic than zebras. He questioned its integrity to such an extent that he did not hesitate to poke a finger into the alcohol flame. That convinced him. "Suffering kittens!" he exclaimed ruefully as he nursed the finger. "Yes, that is a flame, without a doubt; that is a kettle, and here's a complete and miraculous replenishment of the larder along lines beyond the dreams of avarice. If I were Alladin himself I could not do better!" He pondered for a moment over the mystery, then suddenly turned to the stairs and called down lustily:

"Primrose! Primrose! Primrose!"

Impatiently he stamped about, and receiving no response he sprang down the stairs, calling loudly for the old man, who was then no doubt far below in the subterranean fastnesses of that dreary house scouring cuspidors.

As Tony disappeared through the trap Marjorie



ventured to push the curtain aside to take observations. The situation was an alarming one.

From the stairway below she could hear the poet's voice calling, "Primrose!" He was liable to return at any moment. The dormer window through which she had entered and by which she might conceivably make her escape was some yards away, and she remembered that it had seemed to be frozen fast.

"It's the only way!" she murmured. "I *must* get out."

Gathering courage, she darted toward the window. While she was half way across the attic she heard Tony coming up the stairs, and catapulted herself back to the shelter of the curtain like a mouse eluding pursuit. Only the tips of her grey pumps, peeping from below the calico folds, might have betrayed her trembling presence.

Tony returned as boyishly excited and as impatient as he had rushed away, without waiting for the slow-moving Primrose to follow. Now his eyes fell upon the Yuletide decorations. He touched the holly and ivy with reverent fingers and stood for a moment gazing thoughtfully at the spray of mistletoe. Presently, as he moved about, he tripped over the market basket.

"Jove!"

Opening the basket, he took from it a rose-colored angora muffler. With mystification glittering in his eyes and wrinkling his forehead, he wound the muffler around his neck.

"I may have to surrender those other things—when I wake up," he muttered. "But, by all that's bountiful, I'll keep this muffler! It's too comfortable a thing to let go this weather, sleeping or waking."

He picked up the now nearly denuded drumstick from the table where he had dropped it and cleaned it to the shank. Throwing it into the waste-basket under his table, he returned to the trunk and took another survey.

"Marvelous!" he breathed. "A tea service! Egg-shell porcelain! And a tea-caddy of sandalwood, cut-glass sugar bowl! What a noble sausage—imperial bologna! And sandwiches!" He took a bite, and smiled: "They're as real as the chicken!"

A knock at the door impelled him to run to the trap and go down a step.

"That you, Primrose?"

"Yes, sir!" replied the husky tones of the faithful servitor.

"Then come up! Come up!"

Tony reached down, seized Primrose by the collar of his loose coat—an act that caused the occupant al-

most to fall out of it at the other end—and dragged him into the room.

“Anything the matter, sir?” gasped Primrose, fighting for breath. “Anything happened to upset you, sir?”

“*Upset* me? Well, what do you think?” went on Tony, slowly and impressively. “Kris Kingle has been here!”



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE VIOLET ROSETTE.

**T**HE mental processes of Jerry Primrose were not rapid of movement, and as Tony pointed to the trunk with its appetizing display he could only wink his faded eyes and allow his mouth to fall open in wonderment.

"Explain, good Primrose," shouted Tony, "this multiplicity of delectable nutriment, this largesse of eats, this sumptuous banquet! And, look around you! These holiday decorations! Don't tell me they were all brought by Elijah's ravens!"

It was then that a solution of the puzzle worked itself out in Primrose's brain. Looking at Tony rather reproachfully, he said:

"You've gone and blowed in the whole three dollars and seventeen cents!"

"What? That? Them? Those?" cried the youth scornfully. "For three-seventeen? This isn't bargain day at the Ritz. No! No! There lie my frugal foragings."



He indicated the bag with the loaf of bread, and the rest of the humble provender he brought in, which lay neglected on the floor by the side of the trunk.

"I'm blowed!" ejaculated the old man.

"You're a clever dissembler," charged Tony, sternly. "Now, tell me at once. You know whence came these gifts. Don't deny it. The truth!"

"'Pon me word, sir——"

"They came from the gentleman in the fur coat. He smuggled them in with your connivance. He tipped you to hold your long tongue." Then swinging around ferociously to face the protesting Primrose, Tony demanded: "Where's that tip?"

Tremblingly Primrose turned his pockets inside out.

"Honest, sir! I ain't let anybody in since you went out!"

"Then where did this banquet come from?"

Primrose was inspecting the tea service, lovingly feeling the semi-transparent cups and passing his fingers over the sharp edges of the cut-glass sugar bowl. These were things that appealed to him, for they reminded him of past days when, as a well-fed, neatly-dressed butler, he had had occasion to handle them professionally.

"'Fore Gawd, sir, I'm tellin' the truth! I don't

know." His protest was too tearfully honest to be questioned. Now he turned his attention again to the service. "This here is the most genteel china I've seen since I used to be butler for the Suydams, sir. It would be a real pleasure, I'm sure, to serve tea in these things. And the tea in this here caddy," he continued as he opened it and inhaled rapturously, "it's tea as *is* tea, sir."

"But that doesn't explain where it all came from," mused Tony, rocking on toes and heels, while he regarded the old man doubtfully. "Listen, my good Primrose. Do you think there is any one in this house who—er—entertains a secret passion for me?"

"Not a chance, sir," returned the old man in a solemn tone of conviction.

Tony laughed and made another discovery. Here are cigarettes—cigarettes—by the hundred!" He stuffed two of them in Primrose's gaping mouth and lighted another for himself.

"It *would* make you believe in Kris Kingle, sir—now wouldn't it?"

"Or fairies!" Tony shouted joyously. "That's it! Fairies have been here!"

"I didn't let no fairies in this afternoon, sir."

Tony meanwhile had picked up a dust-covered ladder from a corner of the garret and was lugging it

across the room, with his eye upon a trap door in the roof above his head.

"What are you doin' with the ladder?" asked the puzzled Primrose.

"Fairies always come in by the roof," replied Tony. "Hold the ladder while I go up to the trap door. That's right! Don't let it slip!"

With the ladder planted firmly against the edge of the trap, and the old man steadying it with hand and foot, Tony went up and began to push at the trap door.

"So you're expectin' to find fairies up there?"

"There's no telling. They may have heard that we were broke. You see, they didn't know about that check for three-seventeen. Ah! There goes the trap door. It's yielding. I'm going to make a thorough search."

He pushed the trap open and ascended another step on the ladder, so that he could look around on the roof.

"As I thought!" he exclaimed. "There *are* tracks up here—fairy tracks!"

"Pigeon tracks!" was Primrose's sardonic explanation.

Tony closed the trap and came down the ladder before he remarked solemnly:

"The indications are that the commissary department made its advance upon us through the roof!"

"Excuse me, sir, but they couldn't," corrected the matter-of-fact Primrose. "The trap was bolted on the inside."

"That settles it," was the reply, as Tony carried the ladder back to its place in the corner. "Don't you know, you dear old ignoramus, that only fairies could have got that basket through a bolted trap door?"

"I don't believe in fairies!" declared Primrose stoutly.

"Very likely. Well do you believe in—er—drumsticks? If you do, try this."

Primrose gratefully accepted the drumstick and there was real enthusiasm in his tones as he uttered his thanks.

While Primrose gave attention to the chicken leg, and also proceeded to consume a sandwich that was pressed upon him, Tony, cake in hand, turned to his hammock that he might sit and munch at his ease. Instead, he started back from it in comic surprise.

"There *has* been a fairy here," he exploded; "and she's been sleeping in my bed. See! See! She's left her quilt behind her!"

While Tony held up the quilt for the old man's inspection and sniffed its dainty perfume, Primrose



made a discovery on his own account. It was a small rosette of violet ribbon which he picked up from the floor.

"Here's somethin' else she forgot to take with her!"

Tony dropped the quilt, snatched the ribbon from his valet and sniffed it. Without a doubt it came from the same source as the quilt. That delicate perfume—delicate as it was—could not be mistaken.

"The plot thickens!" he declared. "This, my dear Primrose," he went on solemnly and with conviction, "is what I'd call a clue!"

Primrose knew better. "That ain't a clue," he protested. "No, sir! It's, what-you-may-call-it off—lingerie!" He pronounced it to rhyme with "fingery" if there were such a word.

"You think so?" grinned Tony.

"Sure! I've seen 'em in shop windows on the avenue." This expansively, like the man of the world that he was.

Tony considered the rosette thoughtfully. At last he said: "Cinderella, when she visited her prince, left behind a glass slipper. . . . My fairy godmother, when she visited me to-day, left behind a violet rosette. That's rather nice. Quite an idea! I think I can use it."

"Use it?" protested Primrose. "Gentlemen don't wear things like that."

"Possibly not. But authors! Well, they use just such trifles to decorate their plots. I needed something like this for that song in the second act. Here! Clear out now! I'm going to work! I'll lay the rosette here on my table, for inspiration."

"But we ain't found out yet who sent——"

"I'll leave that to you. I'm struck with an idea—they don't come often—I can't afford to lose it—I must get to work. You go ahead and learn the name of my fairy godmother. When you have it, come and tell me. Oh, by the way," Tony interrupted himself, as he picked up from the floor the oblong parcel he had brought in with him. "Here's a Christmas present for you—a pair of suspenders. Useful and decorative at the same time."

"Oh, sir," gulped Primrose as he opened the parcel and took the decidedly gaudy articles in his trembling fingers. "You shouldn't have blowed yourself on me like this."

"But see—the fairies provide. Take this sausage—it's all dressed up! You're wild about sausage. But don't eat the sash!"

Primrose took the smoked sausage and was admiring the pink ribbon on it, when there was a sudden—

and unpleasant—interruption. The Great She-Bear put her head through the trap of the stairs and delivered herself of a baritone cough. Then, as the old servant turned in her direction, she at once opened the vials of her wrath upon his unlucky head.

"So, you're up here again, spending the day—are you?"

"Not spending the day," interposed Tony Quintard, politely. "Just bringing up a letter to me."

"Oh, I know," she snapped. "I heard you calling him half an hour ago. Do you think I'm payin' him wages just to fiddle about up here all afternoon, bringin' you a letter?"

"Well, you need not make such an infernal row about it."

"I'll make all the row I please," she retorted. "And without askin' leave of you."

"Then you'll make it somewhere else," he told her, with extreme courtesy.

Placing her arms akimbo, her generous-sized hands resting upon her hips, the Great She-Bear advanced a step toward Tony and snorted:

"Don't you give me any of your impudence, young man?"

"I might give you all the impudence I could scrape together, and the balance would still be in your favor," was his suave rejoinder.

"If you can't talk plain, keep your tongue to yourself."

"In plain words, madam, I object exceedingly to your rude habit of bursting into my apartment without knocking."

"It's my house!" she stormed. "I'll do as I like in it."

"This is my room. You have no right to enter without my permission, so long as I pay the rent."

She turned on him in malicious triumph. "You haven't paid your rent. But you can go and squander the money you ought to be givin' me, on swell food, and—and Christmas decorations——"

"Here! I'll pay the rent, if that's what you want," broke in Tony, taking two one-dollar bills from his waistcoat pocket. "Here it is—two dollars. Don't forget to give me the receipt."

"That's all very well," she growled, as she pushed the money inside the front of her dress. "But I want you to understand, Mr. Quintard, that I won't have you keepin' Jerry Primrose potterin' around up here, chinnin' to him an' fillin' his old gullet. And as for you," she abruptly turned on the old man "you



go down stairs double-quick and get to work. When you've done the cuspidors, you can scrub the vestibule. D'ye hear?"

Although Primrose uttered a very humble "Yes, mum!" as he disappeared, he contrived to make Tony aware of a slow and watery wink which conveyed a world of meaning. Tony knew that while Primrose might yield to the enemy temporarily, he had a strategic plan in his mind which would bring him back to the service of the young man before the day was over.

"Primrose is my servant, Mr. Quintard,—not yours," finished the Great She-Bear as she followed Primrose down the stairs.

"Thank you for putting it so delicately," laughed Tony. "And just to show you that there's no ill feeling, permit me to offer you a piece of my chicken. The choicest part is none too good for you. Now, here is a particularly tender morsel."

He leaned over the railing, proffering the neck on the end of a fork. She seemed inclined to snatch it from the fork and throw it in his face. But she controlled the impulse, and, with a malevolent frown, growled: "Eat it yourself!" and vanished, banging the door furiously behind her.

Tony lighted a cigarette and walked slowly to his writing table. The Great She-Bear had ceased to

exist to him. He lifted the bow of ribbon—very gingerly in two fingers—and knit his brows in thought. But somehow the inspiration sought did not come, notwithstanding the fact that he held the rosette in one hand while he urged his pen with the other.

At last he threw down the pen, and, with an impatient groan, got up from his chair. "What's the matter?" he grumbled. Then, brightening suddenly: "I know—my thinking-cap!" It was the battered and shabby turban which lived on the shelf, whose curtains had sheltered Marjorie. All this time she had been standing there, straight up behind the ragged folds in great trepidation, but quite unconscious that the tips of her slippers were on view below the edge of the curtains.

As Tony put on the turban, his eyes chanced to fall upon the small gray shoes and he started involuntarily. Then recovering himself a little, he stared hard at the little shoe-tips and tried to construct some reasonable theory that would explain their being in his attic.

"No wonder I couldn't work," he said, softly, at last. "Even the presence of a fairy is distracting. You can always tell a fairy by her feet."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE FAIRY SERVES TEA.

**S**O many unheard-of things had taken place in Tony Quintard's attic on that chilly Christmas Eve, that he was in a mood to accept any unusual visitation quite as a matter of course. Even a pair of grey-shod little feet was not to be wondered at unduly.

Still, he *would* like to know who or what those dainty feet supported. So, standing at his table, and addressing the unknown in the peremptory tone in which a magician in an extravaganza commands his familiar demon to "Appear!" Tony declaimed:

"I know not whence you came, nor by what magic means you gained entrance here. But, as genie of this castle, I bid you—come forth!" Nothing came of this adjuration, and after a pause, he added, in reassuring, everyday accents: "I promise not to eat you."

It was then that the curtains parted, and Marjorie

blushing distractedly, and in a flutter of beautiful confusion, stood in the opening looking at him.

There was a half-smile on her lips, while her wide-open eyes pleaded for mercy.

"Oh, my artistic soul! Fairies and ministers of grace, introduce me!" exclaimed Tony, as he removed his turban, and, his face lighted up with admiration and surprised delight, made her a low bow.

Marjorie in some confusion started to speak out. Checking her with a gesture, Tony went on suddenly:

"No, no! If you have a voice, don't speak—not yet! Leave *me* to explain you." He paused to collect himself. Then: "You came from the Isle of Bliss—on a sunbeam. One of those bright, playful, early-morning sunbeams that we hear so much of, but never rise in time to meet. They have the run of my attic—for one of the smallest hours—while I still sleep. That's it! A sunbeam—out of the perfumed southland—carried you in very early this morning. You had just finished your marketing, and, as any lady fairy naturally would, you called your sunbeam, as mortals call their cabs, to take you home again. But your sunbeam had been waiting for you in the vineyard—just across from the delicatessen shop. Probably he had lingered too long over the grapes, and, feeling in a sportive mood, he picked you up



and inadvertently shot through my window-pane."

Marjorie, delighted with the fancy, so earnestly expressed, broke into a rippling laugh.

"Ah!" exclaimed Tony. "She laughs!"

"I would laugh more," she assured him, "if my teeth were not chattering. Won't you invite me to tea? The kettle's boiling."

"A thousand pardons," apologized Tony, effusively. "Here is a chair, *the* chair. Permit me! You provide the feast, I the hospitality."

She turned to the chair and seated herself with demure gravity. Tony pushed the trunk in front of her, to serve as a table, as he continued:

"Accept a mortal's thanks for this delightful Christmas fare. Pray join me. Ah! A fairy at tea!" he added, as she proceeded to put tea into the teapot, with a thoughtful eye on the steaming kettle. "I also beg to thank you for trimming my humble habitation after the fashion of the season, and for the scarf! You see"—he indicated the muffler around his neck—"I wear your colors. And for the quilt—in which I take the liberty of wrapping you."

He brought the pink-and-white quilt from the hammock and draped it about her shoulders. "I shall be glad to have you chatter, but not with the cold."

"You make me feel very much at home," she declared. "How do you like your tea?"

He had gone over to the curtain which had hidden her for so long, and was bringing forth a soap-box for a seat. He answered over his shoulder:

"I think I like it strong."

"But you must not have it strong," she objected. "It isn't good for you. Men never know what is good for them."

"I'm sure this visitation of yours is very good for me," smiled Tony, taking his place upon the soap-box across the trunk from her.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed in a panic. "I forgot the cream."

"Must you have cream in your tea?" asked Tony, wonderingly. Well, it might possibly be achieved. At least he would make a bold pretense of gratifying her whim. He turned to the top of the stairs and in the tone of lord of the manor, called:

"Primrose!"

"Oh, please! I never take cream in my tea."

"Neither do I," responded Tony, exceedingly relieved. "Never mind, Primrose!" he called down the trap, after the fashion he had so happily assumed, then in his own boyish way he turned to the girl again.

"Neither do I take cream—in anything. It's too fattening."

As he reseated himself and Marjorie passed him a cup of tea, she remarked, easily and quite as if they had known each other for years: "I like cream nice and thick on big strawberries, or whipped on top of chocolate."

"If you'll promise to come again, I'll promise to have strawberries and chocolate and cream. Meanwhile, may I offer you some of my cake. I can recommend it. And—by the way—would you have far to come?"

He handed her a slice of cake, which she took with a smile of thanks.

"Why should I answer?" she laughed. "You explained my coming so beautifully."

"H'm! Yes!" he answered, dubiously. "But—er—don't you think I was a trifle sketchy as to details?"

"You insist upon having the details?" she teased.

"I entreat."

"Suppose I tell you a story?"

"I can think of nothing I should like better," he said, helping himself to a sandwich.

"Well, then," she began. "Once upon a time a

rich little girl came from a far country to live alone in a big house with her father."

Tony half arose from the soap-box with a start as he asked her, in ominous alarm:

"You're not the rich girl from next door, are you?"

"You must not interrupt like that," reproved Marjorie. "This rich girl was very lonely, so she engaged—a companion."

"Oh, you're her companion?" assumed Tony, with a sigh of relief.

"I told you not to interrupt," she reminded him, raising a finger in playful rebuke. "Now, this companion was a sort of poor relation. She was also much alone, and weary of the world. One day, she heard of a young man who lived at the top of the house next door——"

"Sir Romney-of-the-Long-Tongue told the Veiled Princess about the poor young man?"

"The Veiled Princess?" she repeated, bewildered.

"Yes. That's what I call the billionaireess who lives in the adjoining palace. I suppose Romney told her, and she told you."

"It may have happened that way," conceded Marjorie. "But the heroine of my story——"

"The Princess's companion?"



"Of course! Well, she never would have known a thing about her neighbor if it had not been for this:

" 'He rules no realm! He's more than king!  
A woman's joy his harvesting!  
He spins no song, he rears no dome!  
Out of his heart he builds a home.' "

Tony Quintard's face lighted up with flattered delight as the clear, low tones of the girl gave forth these lines, to the music set to them by Albert Sewall. His voice shook as he exclaimed:

"My lines! You sing them as though you like them! . . . Romney told me that the Princess——"

"Will you please not interrupt?" reproved Marjorie.

"Forgive me. I was just curious, you know. Romney said the Princess liked the song. I—I wondered if *you* did."

"It was the song that gave the Princess's companion the courage to—to—venture across the roof from her window to yours."

"Across the roof?" he cried, rising from his soap-box to look out of the window. "By Jove! I never thought of that. You have plenty of nerve."

"It is perfectly safe," she laughed. "Only—a very cold crossing."

"You're wonderful!" he assured her, admiringly.

"Oh, I'm quite strong. See!" She held out her arm, with her small white fist clenched, laughing.

"Ah! A marvelous muscle!" He touched her arm shyly with the tip of his finger. "May I have another cup of tea, without interrupting your thrilling narrative?"

"Your song was your letter of credit," she told him, refilling his cup.

"It was! I got three dollars for it," he laughed. "They give you twenty-five cents a line. I remember wishing I'd written two or three more lines while I was about it."

"It was worth twenty-five *dollars* a line," was her indignant comment.

"Thank you," he returned, rising to bow, and gravely reseating himself. "I wish you were an editor. But—I have interrupted you again."

"I knew that anybody who could talk to your heart like that must be awfully nice——"

"I am—believe me," Tony agreed, laughing.

"So—well, I thought it would be only neighborly, you know, if I should—er—call on you. Don't you think so?"

"Nothing could possibly be more neighborly. It is an old and delightful custom, which I am glad that

you, in the kindness of your heart, have revived. But," waving to the feast before them, "you have gone the custom one better, thank you."

"Oh! These?" she smiled, glancing at the trunk. "Well, I—I could not help that. It was only in the way of—of looking after you. My mothering instinct, I suppose."

"Which you got from your mother, doubtless."

"Yes," she returned, and her tones were a little uneven, while a film dimmed her eyes. "My mother was—was such a—a sweet mother! She was always looking after people who hadn't mothers. Or who were ill, or sad, or lonely!"

"I understand," he murmured, so low that she could barely catch the words.

"I knew you would," was her soft response.

"I've been calling you my fairy godmother, you know. I always felt that I must have one somewhere." He extended his hand across the trunk, as he continued, smiling: "Welcome! I am delighted to meet you! But, to be absolutely authentic, you should have a cap. Under the circumstances, however, I think the hood you wear will do very well. Probably it is more becoming than a cap."

"The hood should, of course, make me invisible," she reminded him.

"I am glad it is not that kind of a hood."

"You understand," she went on, "I didn't intend to be seen. I thought it would be so jolly—such a lark—to have a hand in your Christmas, and disappear without being discovered."

"But it's ever so much better that I discovered you," he declared. "And, technically speaking, it should not have been otherwise. Fairy godmothers always appear to their beneficiaries, and give good advice with their gifts."

"But I don't know you well enough to give you any real gifts, as fairy godmothers do."

"Not *real*? These things you have brought me are most substantial. And let me tell you I think it was very jolly—very sweet of you—to take so much trouble."

"It has made me very happy that you—— No one could have accepted these foolish little things more graciously."

"I accepted them in the spirit in which they were given."

She gazed at him with a thoughtful expression for a moment. Then she burst out, impulsively:

"You *are* the Cinderella-man!"

"The Cinderella-man?" he questioned, with humorous surprise.



"That's what I've been calling you to myself," she confessed, with a little blush. "I hope you don't mind."

"I shouldn't mind if you called me 'Towser'!" he declared, heartily.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HIS NEW SECRETARY.

**T**HERE was a rather long pause, which ended when their eyes met and both broke into laughter.

"What will you take for your thoughts?" quizzed Tony.

"Yours?" she flashed back.

"Ladies first!"

"Well, I was thinking that we are going to be good friends."

"Thank you," he responded, heartily: "There's no doubt about it!"

"Now you know my thoughts, it is your turn," she reminded him. "Pay up!"

"I was thinking," he rejoined, echoing her tone, "that I'm glad you are not the Veiled Princess."

She looked at him with surprised concern. "You dislike princesses so much?"

"I do, outside of books." He was emphatic. "Rich

girls in the flesh are conceited, empty-headed bores!" he added warmly. "And their families are worse. If a man pays a princess the slightest bit of attention, her family immediately suspects he is after her money."

"Ah! You have had an unfortunate experience?" Marjorie's blue eyes were downcast.

"I? Never! I never paid any attention to princesses—and I never, never will!"

Marjorie glanced at him from beneath her sweeping lashes. She liked the positive opinions of this plain-spoken young man. And yet—she wished he were not so sure that he would not like at least *one* rich girl.

"I'm the last one in the world to take the part of princesses," she declared. "But I do think you are rather hard on them."

"But, consider! Does a poor man—a poor working man, in particular—want to ruin his life by marrying a millionairess?"

"How can she ruin his life?"

"In a dozen ways," he rejoined. "First of all, he couldn't expect her to live as he has been used to living. That would mean that he must accept assistance—pecuniary assistance—from either the princess herself or her family. That would be the death



of his self-respect. Second, it would kill his ambition. There would no longer be the actual, biting necessity to work, and necessity is a great spur to ambition. Third, without ambition, without work, he would become a most unhappy wretch. Fourth, all the joy of not knowing what is coming next—the filip of speculation—would be removed from his life. Fifth, and, for the time being, the last—he never would have what I imagine to be the most profound of satisfactions—the privilege of taking care of a woman all by himself—working for her, struggling for her, suffering for her.”

Tony had unconsciously become more and more earnest as he thus expounded his convictions. At the end, as he realized that he had been somewhat oratorical, he smiled a little in half apology. Nevertheless, he was pleased to see that she looked at him in sober approval.

“I—I agree with you,” she said, seriously.

“I was sure you would.”

“But suppose,” she ventured, “just suppose, you know, that you should happen to—run across a princess who cared nothing about money—only the things you speak of, and—and that you should like her very much——”

“My dear fairy godmother,” he interrupted, laugh-



ing lugubriously, "such a princess doesn't exist—outside of a book."

"I said 'just suppose!' You'd pay some attention to her? You would not turn up your nose at her, would you?"

"No!" he laughed. "I'd be fearfully polite to her."

"You might even grow to—to like her?"

"Certainly. I might even grow to be quite fond of her."

"Well, then," she announced, triumphantly, "the Veiled Princess next door is like that."

"Impossible! I can't believe it. It's just your loyalty to her."

"No, indeed. I can prove it to you. Let me bring her to call some day."

He started from his seat in alarm, hands raised in protest.

"Please—please don't! I really should be terribly put out. I'll take your word for it. I'll believe whatever you wish me to believe——"

"I think you might be a trifle more hospitable."

She said this with a pout that was as charming as everything else she did.

"It isn't that I'm inhospitable," he explained. "I'm cowardly. I'm more afraid of a princess than I should be of a polar bear."

"Anyway," she said, holding out her hand, "you're not afraid of me."

He took her hand, but with regretful raising of his brows.

"You are not going—so soon?"

"I must. I have my—my duties."

"I'd forgotten! Then, it wouldn't be kind in me to keep you. By the way, I think this belongs to you." He picked up the rosette from the table. "I'd like to keep it. It's been a source of inspiration to me."

She laughingly acknowledged her loss.

He pointed to the manuscript on the table. Then he picked up a sheet of it and read:

"Love, whose feet are shod with light,  
Lost this ribbon in her flight.  
Rosette of the twilight sky,  
Waft to me Love's lullaby!"

The girl listened and, when he had finished, he saw that she was holding out the violet rosette to him.

"Keep it—in payment for the verse."

"You like it?" he asked, very much flattered.

"Ever so much. Any one who can write songs like that should write an opera. Why don't you write an opera? There's a lot of money in operas. Did

you know they are offering a prize of ten thousand dollars for an opera, at this very moment?"

"Yes, I know," he laughed, as he picked up his manuscript and shook it at her playfully. "This is the book that's going to win the prize."

"Oh! Oh! Really?" Her eyes widened with surprise. "May I see it? May I?"

"Of course." He handed the pile of written pages to her. "You don't have to read it, you know."

"How nearly is it finished?"

"Oh, I'll have it done in time!" he assured her. "Can you read my handwriting?"

"It is rather scriggly," she admitted. "But I can make it out." Then, as with a practical thought, she continued: "You know, you should have this type-written."

"I suppose it should be. But——"

"I have a typewriter——" she interrupted, quick

"I don't think I could manage one."

"But *I* can. . . . Let me type your man' for you?"

"That would be an imposition."

"I'd love to do it," she insisted, brushing objections. "And I'd take awfully good manuscript."

"It would be splendid of you to

"Then you will?"

He took the manuscript from her and lovingly turned over the sheets while she looked on.

"It would be a wonderful favor," he answered, "if you will. All but the last two pages. That will be up to the end of act two."

"And I'll finish the rest as you give to me."

You'll be helping me tremendously," he continued handing her the manuscript.

"It will make me happy if I can help you even the least little bit." The color rose in her cheeks as she spoke. She finished hurriedly: "Now I must go." She turned to the window.

"Just a moment!" protested Tony.

"Yes?"

He picked up a broom from a corner of the room and waved it significantly.

"I want to sweep the snow off—to make a path for you across the roof."

Before she could remonstrate he had forced open the window with a tug, in spite of the frost, and had climbed out to the roof, where he went to work industriously with the broom. In a moment he opened the window and peered into the room.

"May I trouble you for the salt?"

"Salt?" she repeated, puzzled. Then as she saw



what he wanted it for, she laughed and took a salt-shaker from the trunk, saying, as she gave it to him: "You are so nice and thoughtful."

"There's no danger of your slipping now," he said as he came into the room and closed the window. "Oh, the basket! Why didn't I think of putting you in it and sleighing you across?"

"Thank you. I'd rather walk," she laughed, possessing herself of the manuscript, and holding out her hand to him in farewell.

"Now that you've found the way," smiled Tony, "you'll come again?"

"I must!" she reminded him, simply. "You've engaged me as your secretary."

"That was clever of me. When shall I see you again?"

"That will depend entirely upon the Princess. I'll come my first afternoon out. She may let me off tomorrow. You see, it will be a holiday."

"A holiday!" He hesitated. Then he felt in his waistcoat pocket. "I wonder if—you would be good enough to accept—this little Christmas present?" He was like a boy as he withdrew his fingers from the pocket, brought forth the gold chain and locket that Primrose had found in the drawer, and dropped it into her palm.

Her eyes lighted up with wonder. "It's very beautiful and old," she said, softly.

"It is a hundred years old," he told her. "Perhaps more than that. It has a picture of my—my real mother in it."

"Your mother? Oh!" holding it out to him. "I couldn't take anything so precious!"

"That's just why I'm giving it to you," he said, gently. "Because it *is* precious."

She touched the locket with the tips of her fingers as it lay in her other hand. Without looking at him, she spoke in the manner of one making a dear and solemn pledge: "I'll take it and keep it—for you"—she paused. "So long as we are friends."

He took her hand and led her to the window.

"Good night!" said he, as he helped her over the sill. "Good night, little fairy godmother!"

She followed the path he had made for her through the snow. Over her shoulder she called to him:

"Good night, Cinderella-man! Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas," he called after her, and stood there watching until she disappeared around a chimney. Then he closed the window and, pulling up a chair to the table, picked up his brier pipe, filled it with tobacco, and smoked thoughtfully long after the room became quite dark.



*"Good-by, Cinderella-man!"*







## CHAPTER XIX.

### A FEW CHANGES.

**T**HE old year was dying. It was a week after the afternoon on which the fairy godmother served tea to Tony in his attic, finishing the entertainment by taking away two acts of his opera so that she might transcribe them in typewriting.

In that week a great change had come over the aspect of Tony's domicile. The window had been washed, for one thing. That was something that had not happened to the window in ages. So long as enough light penetrated the glass to enable him to write and he could make out the time by the church clock when he looked out, Tony tacitly assumed that the window was clean enough.

But when a certain young lady insisted that the panes should be washed and polished forthwith, Tony took counsel of Primrose, and that faithful individual applied himself to the task so efficiently that there was a noticeable increase in the light of the apartment while daylight lasted.

Other improvements there were, too. New chintz curtains formed lambrequins at the window, while other curtains of the same pattern concealed the Gloucester hammock and the washstand, and replaced the old calico drapery that had hung in front of the recess used as a wardrobe.

The big, battered old trunk was still in its old place near the head of the stairs, but had been so transmogrified that it hardly knew itself. A daintily trimmed couch cover enveloped it, and two embroidered sofa cushions crowned it.

Moreover, the attic was fairly warm, although the weather was just as cold as it had been on Christmas Eve. But a new oil stove, glittering and very pleasant to look at, stood between the trunk and Tony's writing table, making him independent of the wretched little register in the floor which never attended adequately to its business. Just now, however, the oil stove was not alight.

A comfortable camp-chair, a folding card-table—just the thing for a bachelor's quarters—and other little comforts, decorative and useful, were about the room, all silently speaking of the thoughtfulness of somebody who knew instinctively what to do—and who, therefore, was necessarily a woman.

Primrose—in whom there was no observable

change, by the way—was in the attic alone. He seemed to be enjoying the new curtains very much. He went from one to the other giving them a twitch this way and that, and putting them into certain folds that he considered desirable.

A tapping at the door in the trap that sounded as if it were done with a walking-stick, broke off Primrose's musings and made him shuffle hurriedly down the stairs.

Directly afterward he came up again, following a man in a fur coat. It was Romney Evans. A stick in his hand evidently had been used to demand admittance.

"So Mr. Quintard is out?" were the first words of the caller as he reached the top of the attic stairs, a little out of breath.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Quintard said to me, as he went down the stairs: 'I'm goin' out for a breath of air,' he says. That means, knowin' Mr. Quintard's habits as I do me own—that he's not likely to be back before about half-past three."

Romney Evans looked at his watch, while Primrose furtively glanced through the window at the church clock. His manner clearly showed that he wished the visitor had not come.

"In that case," remarked Romney, "I haven't long to wait."

"I don't know, sir. Of course, there's no tellin'. He might go for a longer walk than usual. He's been workin' so hard that he needs exercise. When he does come back he'll be wantin' to go right to work again."

Romney Evans laughed at the too obvious anxiety of the old man to send him away without seeing Quintard.

"It's no use, Primrose. You can't get rid of me. I'm going to wait. I've come here to see Mr. Quintard, and here I remain till he comes."

He plumped himself into the camp-chair, crossed his knees, and looked up at Primrose with an exasperating smile.

"I wasn't thinkin' of such a thing as gettin' rid of you, sir," protested Primrose.

"Then we might as well dismiss it as a topic of conversation," returned Romney, adding, as he waved his stick about the room: "Quite a metamorphosis!"

This last word was quite over Primrose's head. He did not care to acknowledge that he did not understand its meaning, however, so he replied, sagely:

"You may be right, sir. But that—in a way of



speakin'—is a matter of opinion, as Mr. Quintard would say."

"There can be but one opinion—Mr. Quintard has struck it rich."

Romney made this statement tentatively, looking hard at the old man the while.

"Yes, sir—Oh, yes, indeed, sir," spluttered Primrose. "He *has* had a bit o' luck. Still you know, sir——"

The roar of the Great She-Bear came from below, as if she were uncomfortably near. The old man stopped in the middle of a sentence and looked apprehensively in the direction of the stairs. He had sound reason for expecting trouble from that quarter.

"Primrose! Come down out of there! Hear me?"

The head and shoulders of the grizzly-faced landlady appeared above the level of the floor, and she was shaking one of her big fists at him. Before Primrose could answer, and while he was still feebly groping for words that might conceivably present his case in a favorable light, she caught sight of Romney.

"Huh! I didn't know the gentleman was here," she growled apologetically.

Romney rose and bowed, while Primrose, believing he saw an opening, explained timidly:

"I was showin' him up. He's waitin' to see Mr. Quintard."

"Well, if he is," snarled the Great She-Bear, turning upon her man-of-all-work, "*you* are not waiting to see Mr. Quintard, are you?"

"No, madam," interposed Romney. "He was entertaining me."

"If there's any entertaining to be done, *I'll* do it!" she returned, shortly. Then, once more addressing herself to Primrose with her characteristic gentleness, she threatened: "Let me catch you here again, you lump, and I'll take the broom to you."

"It was my fault," interposed Romney. "I'm afraid I——"

"No, it wasn't anybody's fault but his own," declared the Great She-Bear, flatly. "You don't know what a trial he is, the old reprobate! Potterin' and dawdlin', and takin' it easy, when he's got his work waitin'."

Primrose tried to express contrition in his countenance. Unfortunately, he had the kind of face which seemed to sag down and become downright aggressive in its feebleness when he wanted to be propitiatory. To a creature of the Great She-Bear's temperament it was unbearably aggravating. She went at him fiercely.

"Don't stand there with your mouth open! Nothin's goin' to fall into it! Clear out, and be quick about it! You've got the hall to sweep, the bannisters to wipe down, and—mind!—when you have that done, you'll sift the ashes!"

Primrose groaned, and with a feeble "Excuse me, sir," to Romney, plunged desperately down the stairs out of sight.

"I ain't seen you since the day you paid Mr. Quintard's rent," remarked the Great She-Bear to Romney, in an effort at polite conversation.

"That's my misfortune," he returned with a bow.

"You've been here since—ain't you?"

"I've called once or twice."

"The way he has this place all fussed up, beats me." Then with a cunning look at Romney: "I guess you give him the money."

"I don't give Mr. Quintard money," replied Romney emphatically, seating himself in his camp-chair.

He meant it as an intimation that he would prefer to be alone, but the Great She-Bear had come up to the attic to find out something, and she was not the woman to be turned aside by mere reticence.

"I'd like to know how a man as poor as he is can buy better curtains than I have in my best rooms,"

she complained. "And, what's more, I'd like to know how these things got up here."

Romney drew out his watch, studied it, and looked annoyed.

"I generally know what comes into this house," she went on. "All these changes—new curtains, oil stove and such—have a queer look to me. There's somethin' *very* queer about it. Don't you think so?"

As she plumped herself squarely in front of Romney, to compel an answer, he was obliged to say something. So he repeated her own word, interrogatively:

"Queer?"

"Queer! Yes! That's what I said!" she rejoined, emphatically. "All this here ain't like a man. Now, if a woman had this attic, she might be puttin' up curtains and so on. But for a man to do it—well, it would be queer, as I said."

She might have said much more along the same line had not her wrathful eye suddenly lighted on the chiffon scarf at the end of the table. She glanced at Romney, but he was looking another way. Slyly she picked up the scarf, smelled it, and raised her eyes suspiciously, muttering: "Scented, of course!" Then, as Romney's attention was still diverted from



her, she slipped the scarf under her apron with a leer of triumph.

"I wonder if you are a relation of his?" she broke out again. "A rich relation, maybe?"

"No," he replied, shortly.

"Could you be a detective, I wonder?"

"No."

"You don't talk much, do you?"

"No."

Finding Romney impossible from a conversational point of view, she tried a new tack, as she moved over to the stairs:

"I guess you'll be waitin' for him?"

"Yes."

The Great She-Bear was on the stairs by this time, half concealed in the trap. From this forum she delivered her ultimatum, swiftly disappearing as soon as the words were uttered:

"Well, you can say to him, for me, that if he can live up here like a dude, he can pay my rent in advance—it will be due on Monday!"

## CHAPTER XX.

### ROMNEY ISSUES A DICTUM.

“**W**HEW!” breathed Romney. “Ah! There’s the church clock striking three. I wonder how long Tony will——”

He had risen from the camp-chair and strolled to the window, stretching his arms as he went. One glance through the panes and he started back, looking for a place to hide himself. The curtain concealing the hammock and washstand was the obvious retreat for him, and he stepped behind it just as the casement was pushed open.

Marjorie Caner’s pretty face, framed by the “liberty” hood, came into the room as she looked cautiously around. Satisfied that there was no one there, she stepped inside and closed the window.

Under one arm was a large, bulky envelope, and in her other hand she carried a small basket. Tripping to the table, she laid the large envelope there and put the basket on the floor. Then she went to

the top of the stairs and listened. With a little laugh, she went back to the table, found a match, and lighted the oil stove.

"There! It will be comfortable in here by the time he comes. Let me see! What else is there to do?"

Romney stepped out from behind the curtain and confronted her in inscrutable silence.

"Oh, Romney!" was her startled exclamation. Then, placing a hand over her heart as if to control its throbbing, she continued, in a relieved tone: "How you frightened me!"

"So, young lady," he returned, sternly. "This is what you are up to?"

"Don't be cross with me, Romney!" she begged. "I'm only doing what you wanted me to do—looking after Tony."

He broke into a laugh. Waving his hand about the room, he remarked, dryly:

"You're making a thorough job of it, aren't you?"

"Oh, no!" she assured him. "There's so much more that I could do. But I don't dare. He only let me put up the curtains because I said I couldn't stand the place without them."

"He doesn't think you buy them, does he?"

"No, no! Isn't it too dreadful? I have to fib

about everything. Oh, Romney! I tell him they're all my personal possessions, stored in the loft next door, and that it's so much better to use them, because they'd only be gathering dust!"

"And he believes you?"

"Every word I say," she returned, with wide-open, penitent eyes. "I'd be terribly ashamed, only it's all for his comfort—like this stove. He thinks I borrowed it from myself. So I did—but I bought it. Isn't it cute?"

"I've never seen anything so cute in all my life," assented Romney, gravely. "It gives out real heat. It looks as if one might even cook on it," he added, as he removed his overcoat and dropped it on the camp-chair.

"One does cook on it," laughed Marjorie, all in a flutter. "Oh, Romney! it's really too wonderful."

"I should say it is," agreed the lawyer. "Tell me all about it!"

"Well, every day I come across the roof at about half-past three, and bring what I call my 'tea' with me. Of course, it's really for Tony. There's, oh, lots of things! Good and nourishing, you know! I *must* fatten him up! After tea, just before I go, I make him hot little messes for his dinner. I just love



to cook! And sometimes it smells so good that I wish I could stay and have dinner with him."

"No doubt!" he commented blandly. "How does he take these ministrations of yours?"

"Oh, in the sweetest, jolliest way!" she answered, enthusiastically. "So—so matter-of-fact! . . . You know, I'm just his fairy godmother."

"His what?"

"His fairy godmother—who pops in and out! To-day I've brought him the typewritten copy of his opera. It's done—finished! All but the editing—touching it up, you know. And—oh, Romney!—it's too beautiful! I love every word of it!"

"I'm afraid you are prejudiced."

"No, indeed I'm not. Grayson, father's secretary—who did the typewriting for me, on the sly—says it's better than 'The Merry Widow!' You know, it has some awfully cunning jokes in it—all mixed up in the dearest way with the romance. The Cinderella-man has a way of making what I'd call *tender* jokes. They make you laugh and cry at the same time. And it's all so like him—so—so—oh! I don't know how to describe it!"

She trailed off into rapturous incoherence. Words failed her to express just how admirable this opera of Tony Quintard's was. She could only gasp and

wave her hands helplessly, with a wistful smile at Romney.

He gazed at her thoughtfully in silence for a few moments. At last, still regarding her with the steady, kindly look that she had come to know—and sometimes dread—he said, slowly:

“I think I understand.”

In a flash she knew what he was thinking. Her wistful smile changed to a look of alarm. She turned away from him, head averted. Sinking down upon the cushioned trunk, she murmured pleadingly:

“Why — why, Romney! You — you — couldn’t think——”

“Well, my dear, I only hope this isn’t going to be more than I bargained for,” he answered, bending down.

She snatched at his fingers and drew him closer to her. Then she placed her hot cheek against his hand, as she whispered:

“Oh, Romney! I’ve never been so—so happy”—she paused. “And so—miserable!”

The sobs *had* to come! In a tempest they broke forth, while she continued to cling to the hand of one whom she felt was her only friend in the great city—the one person who understood her! Her hood

had fallen back, and he passed a comforting hand over her bright hair as he told her softly that there was nothing to cry about.

"It is quite possible that your Cinderella-man is just as much in love with you as you are with him. But, under the circumstances—as any gentleman would—he refrains from declaring himself."

She shook her head and as she dried her eyes resolutely answered, with forced calmness:

"No, it isn't that. *He doesn't care!* I can tell. He's as sweet and nice as he can be—as a brother might be. But he's so—so impersonal. He never really *sees* me! Sometimes he doesn't realize that I am here. I'm like a puppy-dog to him. I'm sure he never thinks of me when I'm away. Of course, his mind is all on his opera. I understand that. Only—I wish——"

"Tony's probably too sure of your service," suggested Romney. "Geniuses have a way of taking things for granted. You must make him anxious."

"Oh, I couldn't do that."

"You must!—just a wee bit!" he persisted.

"But——"

"Now, he expects you here this afternoon promptly at half-past three?"

"Yes. I never was late but once. I sent Celeste

for some strawberries for him, and she was fearfully slow. I heard him whistling for me."

"Oh! He whistles for you?" And Romney whistled softly himself.

"Ye-es," she answered, hesitatingly. "I told him he should whistle if ever he wanted me outside of the regular time."

"I see! You were *ahead* of time to-day."

"I couldn't wait."

"You must wait this afternoon," he told her, firmly. "Keep him waiting."

"Oh, Romney!" she protested.

"Do as I tell you. You must. Here! Take your basket and your manuscript with you, and—get out! Come!"

He gathered up the basket and large envelope, and gave her his hand to assist her from the trunk.

"You really think I should go?" falteringly.

"Most certainly. And you must not come back until at least ten minutes after I give the signal."

"You won't forget? You'll surely give me the signal?" she asked, with sudden misgiving, taking the basket and envelope from him.

"You may depend upon me. Now, let's decide what the signal shall be. Usually, in plays and stories, it is a light placed in the window. But that's not practi-



cal here. What else can I do? I might throw something out of the window."

"No," she objected. "I won't have you messing up my nice, clean roof. Nothing but rain or snow is allowed out there."

"How would it do if I managed to hang one of my best handkerchiefs out of the window? This one?"

He took a gaily-bordered handkerchief from his pocket and waved it playfully before her eyes.

"That would do," she agreed. "Oh! There's a door banging in the lower part of the house. I'm sure it's Tony. He always bangs the front door!"

"Very well, then! Out with you!"

He helped her through to the roof, taking the basket until she was safely outside. Then he gave it to her again and told her to hurry away. But she stopped to warn him:

"Remember! He—he doesn't know who I really am. I'm so afraid that, if he should find out——"

"Away! Away!" was all that Romney answered as he closed the window.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A GENIUS AT FAULT.

**R**OMNEY EVANS was apparently staring out through the frosty panes, when the door of the stairway in the trap closed with a bang and Tony Quintard came bounding up the stairs.

Romney turned. He pretended not to notice the disappointment in Tony's face, but he was glad to see it there.

"Hello, Tony!"

Tony took the proffered hand and shook it perfunctorily. His answering "Hello!" was decidedly lifeless, too. He stared about as if looking for some one else.

"You don't seem overjoyed to see me!" Romney told him with a reproachful smile.

"Why, yes, I am—yes, I am!" was the preoccupied response, as Tony took off his overcoat. "I'm—er—awfully glad to see you! Sit down—sit down, won't you?"

He went over to the window, overcoat and hat in hand, and peered through the glass.

"No, I won't sit down," returned Romney, secretly grinning his satisfaction at Tony's perturbation. "I'm not going to stay. I only dropped in to ask if you hadn't changed your mind about the Princess."

"In what way?" asked Tony, throwing his hat and coat upon the trunk, holding his hands over the oil stove. "In what way do you mean?"

"About meeting her."

Tony looked up from the stove, as if the distastefulness of the question had brought him to himself with a jerk. Bowing with mock ceremony to his friend, he replied with what might have seemed superabundant emphasis:

"I don't want to be rude, Romney, but—no, thank you."

"Well, I shan't insist," replied Romney, carelessly. "By the way, I see you've been making yourself quite comfortable here."

"Yes, yes," was Tony's quick assent. "A friend! Lent me these things! Awfully good of her, wasn't it?"

*"Her?"*

Disregarding the surprise expressed in Romney's

tone as he repeated the pronoun, Tony went on, with a great assumption of candor:

"Yes, old man! And I don't mind telling you that I'm expecting her every minute."

"Oho!" cried Romney, pretending to be shocked. "Tony! Tony!"

"No, you're mistaken," interrupted the young man—and there was real distress in his face. "There's no nonsense between us. This girl is simply doing my typewriting—that's all."

"Some scrubby female from a downtown office?"

"Scrubby?" roared Tony, indignantly. "Why, she's one of the daintiest little things you ever laid your eyes on."

"Ah! And yet you tell me there's 'no nonsense'?"

"There isn't!" rejoined Tony, still more warmly. "We're friends—*friends!* Very good, wholesome friends!"

He strode to the window—it seemed as if he couldn't keep away from it—and looked out anxiously. Romney smiled behind the young man's back, at last inquiring, with facetious solicitude:

"Does she arrive by way of the window?"

"What do you know about it?" snapped Tony, turning swiftly to look at him.

"How should I know anything about it? But the



way you trot up and down to the window makes me suspicious."

Tony went to the window and back twice before he spoke again. Then, suddenly, as if he had made up his mind in desperation, he said:

"See here, Romney! Can you keep a secret?"

"I'm a lawyer, Tony. Keeping secrets is the better part of my trade."

"Well, then, she *does* come by the window," confessed Tony.

"Oh, go on!" cried Romney, incredulously.

"It's a fact! And—and—you'll never guess who it is."

"Never! So you'd better tell me."

"It's my fairy godmother," declared Tony, impressively.

"A minute ago it was your private secretary."

"That's the beauty of a fairy godmother," returned the youth, with the air of imparting a remarkable truth. "She can turn herself into almost anything—from a typewriter to a cook."

"She must be very handy to have about the house. What's her name?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Oh, come, now, Tony! You must call her something."

"I do. I call her 'Godmother'."

Romney shrugged his shoulders impatiently, as if tired of his friend's fencing.

"Are you going to tell me who she is, or not?" he demanded.

"That's the secret!" rejoined the poet, dropping his voice to a confidential whisper. "She's the companion of your Princess next door."

"Oho! That's it, eh? And she sneaks over here across the roof!" Romney started for the window.

"Yes, yes! Come away! She might see you!" complained Tony, pulling him back. "If she were to know anybody was here——"

"I suppose this began by your flirting with her across the roofs and chimneys?"

"It did not!"

"Oh, I don't blame you, my boy! As I recall her, she is not unattractive."

"There is nothing to blame anybody about," rejoined Tony, irritably. "I'm not going to tell you how it began. But I want you to understand, once for all, that there is nothing sentimental in our relations."

"Oh, it's a business proposition, eh?"

"No, no!" negatived Tony, indignantly. "It's—it's a comfortable sort of—oh, thunder! She's the

salt of the earth, and—and all that! Looks after me in the most motherly fashion. Comes every day, with my freshly typewritten copy and a tea-basket. All very chummy, and so on.”

“That’s the way you see the affair,” remarked the lawyer, significantly.

“Excuse me!” broke in the poet. “I won’t have it called an ‘affair’.”

“Pardon me. *You* don’t see it that way. But how does *she* see it?”

“Just as I do, of course.”

“Tony Quintard,” warned Romney, solemnly, “you never know what’s going on in the back of a woman’s head.”

“I have no curiosity to learn.”

“That’s all very well. But where are you two drifting?”

“You old sentimentalist!” laughed Tony. “Your mind is set on a romance that doesn’t exist. Mine is set on an opera that must be finished and mailed to-night. Here’s your rug!” he continued, picking up Romney’s coat and holding it out to him. “Crawl into it. I’ve got to signal my godmother for that manuscript.”

As the visitor took his coat, and, with Tony’s assistance, put it on, he said, over his shoulder:

"You are a stony-hearted young pup!"

Without reply, Tony went to the window, opened it and sent forth a whistle.

"That'll fetch her!" he remarked, as he closed the window and took up his visitor's hat. "Here's your hat, old top!"

"Look here, Tony! Do you regard that girl simply as a machine who grinds out your opera for you, or as a charwoman who scrubs your floor?"

"She doesn't scrub my floor!" snapped Tony.

"But you do regard her as a sort of machine?"

"Oh, you make me tired! I don't *regard* her at all. But I am profoundly grateful to her. And—er—here's your hat!"

"She hasn't come yet," bantered Romney.

"I can't understand what's keeping her. She promised me the finished manuscript this afternoon."

There could be no question that the young man was worried, and it tickled the older man to see it. There was a broad grin on his face when Tony opened the window and whistled again. Romney ventured on a little advice.

"If she *should* come this afternoon——"

"Oh, she'll come!" broke in Tony.

"She's pretty late now, according to schedule! But, as I say, if she *should* come, take a little notice of her



—the girl herself, I mean. Give her some thought. A poet should never lose an opportunity to study the species at first hand.”

“What do you want me to do? Open her mouth and count her teeth?”

“No. Just open your eyes, and—and *count your pulse*,” rejoined Romney. “But I don’t believe she’s coming.”

Tony regarded his cynical friend for a moment as if he would like to throw him down the stairs. Then he jerked open the window and whistled much louder than before. No one came, and he turned to say, in an anxious tone:

“Now, what do you suppose has happened?”

“Ah!” exclaimed Romney, triumphantly. “You’d miss her if anything happened to her, wouldn’t you?”

“Oh, shut up!”

Tony sent a piercing whistle out into the sharp winter air, and was screwing up his lips for another, when Romney placed a restraining hand upon his shoulder.

“I wouldn’t go on whistling like that. She may be ill!”

“A healthy girl like that doesn’t get ill over night!”

“You can’t tell. She might have caught the mumps or measles.”

"Would you—go in next door, and slyly inquire?"

"And probably find her entertaining her young man in the parlor," laughed Romney.

"Huh! It's not likely—not at all likely!"

Tony plumped down to his table and began to write, taking no further notice of his friend, who, as he waved his handkerchief out of the window and replied, calmly:

"If it isn't likely, at least it is possible. You yourself owned that she's quite pretty."

"What's her name?" suddenly inquired Tony, ignoring Romney's remark.

"Her name? Why, let me see! Christian or family name?"

"Both!" barked Tony. "Well, her family name will do. What's that?"

"Her family name? Why—er—er—*Mudge!*"

Tony Quintard swung around in horror.

"Mudge? Impossible! It couldn't be—not that girl!"

"I tell you it is! Mudge, or—or Fudge. Something that rhymes with 'budge'."

"Good Lord!"

"Is it important?"

"Only that I'm writing a note to her. I was going to send it in, but if I don't know how to address it—"

"Poor old Tony!" interrupted Romney. "Perhaps—I only say *perhaps*—if you give it to me, I'll be able to sneak it in to her."

"I'd be awfully much obliged," returned Tony, brightening up. "Here's the letter. You may read it if you like."

"My dear boy, I wouldn't dream of reading your correspondence!" answered Romney, at the same time adjusting his glasses.

"Yes, I want you to. I don't like to say things behind people's backs."

"Oh, that's it, eh? Then I guess I will read it." He took the letter, and composing himself comfortably on the trunk, began aloud: "'My dear Fairy Godmother: I am hoping that you are late simply because you have seen that eminent sentimentalist and distinguished old bore, D. Romney Evans—' "Thank you very kindly!" interjected Romney, looking up—" 'prowling about at my window. But, thank God! he is taking this note with him. Now the fearful thought occurs to me that you may be ill. If you are ill, send for a doctor at once, and I think you'd better have two nurses. If you are not ill, please remember that I am sitting here waiting for that manuscript, which must go into the post to-night. If I do not hear from you within ten minutes, I shall

do something absolutely desperate. What it will be I haven't the slightest idea. I shall depend upon the inspiration of the moment. Oh, to be forgotten by one's only Fairy Godmother!—Forlornly yours,  
THE CINDERELLA-MAN.' ”

Romney burst into a roar of sardonic laughter.

“The Cinderella-Man! I suppose that's your idea of a snappy *nom-de-plume*, eh? ‘The Cinderella-Man!’ Ha, ha, ha!”

“It is not! It's the name she gave me in a pretty spirit of fun.”

“Oh!” Romney apologized.

“Well,” growled Tony, “are you going to deliver my letter, or shall I call a regular messenger boy?”

“Certainly not,” laughed the lawyer. “I promise you that I'll do my best to get it to Miss Mudge.”

He took the letter and sealed it in the envelope. Then he moved to the staircase, smiling as if he were enjoying a strictly private joke. Tony walked over with him.

“Thank you ever so much, Romney! Of course, you understand you are not *always* a bore, by any means. Forgive me, won't you?” he continued, holding out his hand. “You know all that in the letter about you was only my foolishness. You're a bully old brick! That's what *you* are.”



"A good thing to stub your toe on," laughed Romney, and vanished down the stairs. Tony stood for a few moments in front of his table, deep in thought.

He didn't understand. This was the first time his Fairy Godmother ever had been late.

"I'll try it again," he said to himself.

Going to the window and opening it, he sent forth a mournful whistle. There was no result, and he was turning away when he noticed that it was snowing heavily.

"Just my luck!" he grumbled. "The snow will keep her away. She won't want to come over the roof through all this. Where's that confounded umbrella I had around here? Ah! there it is!"

He fished a dilapidated umbrella from a corner, and with some difficulty managed to open it. The cover was torn and several of the ribs were dislocated. He shook his head in despair.

"I don't believe I could keep it over her head," he said to himself. "Still, it might be better than nothing—if she does not bring one with her."

A tap at the window-pane made him start and turn around. The next instant he had hurled the old umbrella into a corner and hurried to the window.

"My Fairy Godmother!" he cried, and flung it wide open.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### MAINLY TEMPERAMENTAL.

N EVER had the Fairy Godmother been so welcome in Tony Quintard's attic.

She held a long envelope in one hand, while on the other arm hung a basket.

Taking the envelope from her first, and then the basket, he gave her his hand to help her down from the sill.

She glanced at him timidly from the corner of her eye as she came in. Was he angry? She could not tell yet.

"Thank heaven, you've come at last!"

By a strong effort, Marjorie contrived to make her tone calm as she asked, innocently:

"Why, what's the matter?"

"You're so fearfully late," he replied, opening the envelope as he walked to the table.

"Am I late?" she asked, sweetly.

"Late? Look at the time! It's nearly four!"

He pointed out of the window in the general direction of the church clock, but his eyes were on his manuscript.

"Nearly four? Why, so it is."

"I expected you a little after *three*!"

She had followed him to the table, and she was very near to him as she asked, softly:

"You were anxious?"

Without looking up he replied in an absent-minded tone:

"You are always so punctual, I thought you might be ill."

"I was finishing your manuscript."

"Ah! It is finished? Capital! Is it all done, to the very end?"

"To the very end."

She picked up the basket from the floor, where Tony had carelessly dropped it, and set it on the trunk.

"You know, you are awfully good," Tony said cheerfully as he spread the manuscript on the table and gazed at it lovingly. "Now I'll be able to get it off to-night."

He seated himself at the table and squared his elbows. Then, dipping a pen in the ink, he prepared to edit the pages. It would have been evident to the

most casual observer that he was oblivious to everything but the work before him.

But Marjorie was human, and it was pleasant to hear words of praise from his lips—even when rather indifferently bestowed.

"So you were the least little bit worried about me?"

Tony seemed not to hear. He was engrossed with the manuscript, running the pages through his fingers, so that he could survey the work as a whole.

"It looks fine, doesn't it?" he exclaimed, addressing no one in particular. "So professional!"

"I asked you a question," said Marjorie, a little tartly, as she hung her cloak over the rail at the staircase.

"I—I beg your pardon," mumbled Tony, more *distract* than ever.

She came nearer to him—and she was pretty enough in her dainty grey frock to have distracted him from his manuscript for a moment, at least, if he had glanced at her—and repeated, distinctly:

"I asked if you were the least bit worried about me?"

"Certainly I was worried about *you*?" he answered, preoccupied, his head bent over his work. "Er—why shouldn't I be?"



It was not what Marjorie wanted, but she would not give up yet. She made another attempt:

"When did you begin to be worried?"

"When you didn't come."

"Right away—at half after three?" she persisted.

Tony jabbed his pen viciously into the inkstand and made a great show of writing something on the manuscript, as he jerked out, in an annoyed staccato:

"Yes—yes! Right away! Immediately!"

Alas for feminine fatuity! Does a woman ever really understand a man—or, worse, a man who is an author? Might not Marjorie have seen that Tony was far away from her, in a world whose confines were marked by the typewritten pages she herself had prepared for his inspection?

Well, she might, perhaps, but—she didn't. Instead, she glided still nearer to the table, as she murmured:

"Were you—very *much* worried?"

Tony gave it up—temporarily. Throwing down his pen desperately, he looked at her in beseeching reproof:

"My *dear* Miss Mudge!"

"Mudge?" she echoed, in comic astonishment.

"Why, what——"

"Yes," he continued, relentlessly. "I shall call you

by your ill-fitting surname whenever you distract me from my work. Now, like a dear, good Fairy Godmother, go and get your—your knitting, and leave me to currycomb my masterpiece.”

“You could have answered me in half as many words,” was her reproachful reminder.

*“Miss Mudge!”*

He thundered this at her, dramatically extending his arm with pointed finger toward the other side of the room.

Marjorie backed hurriedly away from the table, and he resumed his work, taking no further notice of her.

She picked up his overcoat and hat—which he had flung down when he came up the stairs—and hung them up in the recess behind the curtain. She patted the coat with an affectionate little gesture, before she left it on its peg.

On her way back to the trunk she looked across at Tony. He was quite unaware of the look, or even of her presence, as he hovered above his manuscript, with pen upraised, ready to swoop down upon any defect.

From the trunk she took out some socks and looked at one of them dubiously. Then, from a well-equipped sewing-basket, she extracted a wooden

sphere known to the elect as a "mending ball." This ball she dropped into a sock, revealing a disgraceful hole in the heel. She shook her head.

"Oh, dear!"

Apparently she decided to try and repair damages, for she proceeded to settle herself to work. Very gingerly she took up the camp-chair and placed it at the side of the stove. She had been absolutely noiseless, and Tony did not seem to know that she had moved.

Seating herself must also be done without the slightest sound. It was a nervous operation, for she had misgivings that the light chair, with its several loose joints, might creak under her weight.

It occupied ten or fifteen seconds for her to sit down. But she did it at last, without disturbance. Then she seized the sock and began to darn.

She had taken only one stitch, however, before it occurred to her that she was sitting sideways to Tony, so that she could not look at him without turning her head. That must be rectified.

"Just as I had myself settled!" was her regretful inward comment. "What a pity that I have to move again!"

She arose and changed the position of the chair

so that it faced Tony's table. Then, again lowering herself into the chair with the greatest care to make no noise, she breathed a sigh of relief, and after another glance at Tony—which, of course, he did not see—she applied herself seriously to the sock repairs.

There was stillness for several minutes. Marjorie had never darned before, and she was obliged to stop and study the intricacies of her task from time to time. It was during one of these thoughtful pauses that an ejaculation of pleasure came from Tony.

"This is wonderfully clean copy," he broke out, without looking up. "Not an error so far!"

Marjorie beamed in his direction, while Tony continued to scan his manuscript. Suddenly he snorted, angrily: "Ah! I never wrote 'luffing'! I wrote 'laughing'!"

In a second she was behind him, looking over his shoulder.

"Why, where's that?" she asked.

"In act one. This piece of business: 'Kiri-Sawa enters, luffing.'"

Marjorie ventured to place a hand upon his arm as she looked down at the page.

"Oh? That? I—I thought he was supposed to be intoxicated, and that he came in luffing—like a sail-



boat. You know 'luffing' is a nautical term. He might have rolled in all on one side."

The argument rather impressed Tony, and he hesitated before he changed the word. But he did put his pen through it, and substitute "laughing," even while he admitted, with a thoughtful nod:

"Yes, he would come in like that. So he would. Still, we'll have 'laughing' in the manuscript."

Marjorie said nothing more. She went to the stove and saw that the kettle was nearly boiling. Then she seated herself, the sock in her hand, and had just resumed her work when Tony shattered the silence by saying, in a troubled tone:

"Here's a verse that has never satisfied me!"

"You must not be so finicky about it," she warned, "or you'll never finish."

"But, confound the rhyme!" wailed Tony, running his fingers through his hair. "I can't let this go!"

"What is it?" asked Marjorie going to his side.

"It's the song of the guard on the battlement. Here it is on this page. The first verse."

She took the sheet of manuscript from him, and read, in her clear, sweet voice:

" 'The voice of the watch is a spell!  
He paces his beat——"

"That's rotten!" interrupted Tony. "I only put in 'spell' to make it rhyme with 'well'!"

"Wait a minute! I have it, I think," she cried, hopefully. "How would this do? Here:

" 'All's well!

It is the call of the sentinel! ' "

"That's bully!" he shouted. "Give me the page. Thanks! Now, listen:

" 'All's well! All's well! All's well!

"Three times! Do you like that?"

"Very much," was her smiling answer, as he proceeded to chant the remainder of the verse:

" 'Is the song of the sentinel,  
Who paces his beat  
Through rain and sleet,  
From roll of taps till morning gun,  
Each hour cries, from sun to sun:

'All's well! ' "

He was radiant as he turned to Marjorie, and she reflected in her eyes the satisfaction that shone in his.

"Fine, eh?" he exclaimed. "What?"

"And at the end," she advised, "you should have three 'All's wells!' The first by the tenor on the

stage, the second by the baritone at some distance, and the third by the bass, away off."

"I see! I see! Thank you very much indeed. That's ripping! I'll put it in while it is fresh in my mind. A jolly idea!"

While he sat down and wrote hard, in his impetuous way, the girl, after a tender look at the back of his head, with the disordered hair carelessly pushed back from his forehead, moved softly over to her camp-chair, and again attacked the sock with the big hole in the heel.

It was nearly five minutes before anything else occurred to break the monotony of darning. Then Marjorie, as she felt that she was getting the better of the hole by steady labor, allowed her satisfaction to find vent in an unconscious humming of the music of Tony's verse which Albert Sewall had set to haunting music.

Her voice was very low, and if she had realized what she was doing, she would not have supposed it could reach the young man working with such absorbed industry at the typewritten sheets before him.

It chanced, however, that Tony's nerves were strung up to such a pitch that his hearing was abnormally sharpened, and he caught every accent. He glanced up with an expression of keen annoyance.



"How can I concentrate my mind when you are singing *at the top of your voice?*" he complained.

"I'm sorry. But—I was feeling so—so happy!"

"I'll have to send you home," he threatened, "if you don't stop being so violently happy."

"I'll try not to make so much noise about it," was her meek response.

"Thank you!" he grunted.

He hammered away at his work for a minute, while she began on another sock. Suddenly he looked up and demanded:

"What have you to be so happy about, anyway?" Then, hastily, as she was about to speak: "No, no! Don't answer me—or you'll start an engrossing conversation. What I want is quiet!"

Marjorie went on submissively with her darning.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A LOVE PASSAGE IMPROVED.

“**T**HIS is a ripping act!” Tony condescended to say, after a long silence. “Only, I don’t quite like the finish—where the Princess Wisteria slaps Prince Hollyhook’s face and runs away.”

“But he was very impudent to kiss her—right in front of her own palace door,” declared Marjorie. “*Any one might have seen them!*”

“Any one might have seen them?” echoed Tony. “What has that to do with it?”

“Everything! That’s why she was so angry.”

“I thought it was because he *kissed* her.” . . . .

“Not because he *kissed* her,” was Marjorie’s confident assertion. “But because he did it so *publicly*.”

“By Jove! You know more about my heroine than I do myself.”

“Goose!” laughed Marjorie. “She couldn’t possibly be angry just because he kissed her. *She loves him already.*”

Tony was not convinced. He arose from his chair and marched over to the stove, looking thoughtfully across it at Marjorie.

"You're mistaken," he told her. "It is not until the last act that the princess loves him."

"She loves him in the *second*," insisted Marjorie. "But she doesn't *say* anything about it until the *last*."

"You're sure of that?" doubtfully.

"Positive!"

"If that's the case, there should be some expression of it at the end of Act Two—after the slapping." He pondered for a moment. "How could that be? . . . You'll have to help me work this out. Here!" suddenly. "*You* are the princess."

"Yes," assented Marjorie, eagerly, as she put the sock in her work-basket and stood up, ready to play her *role*. "And you're the prince."

"Yes, yes! Come over here! That's right! Now, I say so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so, and kiss you!"

As he mumbled his "so-and-so's" he gazed in mock rapture at Marjorie, finishing by making a dart at her and kissing the air, several inches from her face. Marjorie winked involuntarily at the sound of the kiss, but stood her ground, waiting for the next thing in the scene.

"Now you slap me!" ordered Tony.

She gave him a very gentle pat on the cheek.

"Oh, *harder!*" he cried, impatiently. "I've got to get into the spirit of the thing!"

"But," protested Marjorie, "you didn't really—kiss me."

He laughed, thinking only of the opera.

"Very well. We'll start all over again!"

"Oh, I didn't mean that," was her hurried disavowal. "I was only explaining why I didn't really slap——"

Tony interrupted by making a quick movement as if he really would kiss her this time. But she stopped him with a slap that was considerably harder than the first one.

"That's better!" he decided. They both laughed. "Now you run into the palace. Let's see. Where is the palace? Oh, the trunk, of course! That's the idea! Stay there, while I——"

Marjorie jumped up on the trunk, in the character of the princess, and Tony, as the prince, went down a few stairs, looking up at her.

"Now," he directed, "the princess appears at the window above him, and hearing the prince laughing, throws down the flower-pots at him. Curtain! Eh?"

But Marjorie had her doubts, and, as she leaned

over the rail, looking down at Tony, she expressed them modestly:

"Do you think that's the way she'd express her affection?"

"It would be pretty effective. No doubt about that."

Marjorie shook her head, while Tony looked at her with more respect for her opinions than he might have shown ten minutes before.

"Come back!" she commanded, suddenly, as she jumped from the trunk. "Listen to me! When the princess runs into the palace, she calls her two giant Nubian slaves. She says to them, very angrily: 'Kill that man!' and runs up to the window."

Marjorie illustrated by jumping upon the trunk again.

"Now," she went on, "you are going away, laughing."

"I see," he said, as he went "laughing" down two or three stairs and looked at her from the trap. "Go ahead!"

"The slaves rush out," continued Marjorie. "They seize you and are about to slay you, when I scream from the window: 'Don't you dare hurt that man, or my father will feed you to the tigers!' Curtain!"

As she gazed down at him, her face flushed with



excitement and her eyes sparkling, he ran up the stairs and took her hand delightedly.

"That's immense!" he declared. "The action—the psychology—is right—stunning! All it wants is the proper dialogue—the lines."

"You'll keep that in about the tigers, won't you?"

"Surely! It's such a nice, ladylike touch."

He was at the table by this time, and plumping down in his chair, he seized his pen to write in the changes.

"It makes me so happy to be able to help you, even the least little bit," she ventured, as she followed him.

"You've helped me a great deal," he replied, condescendingly. "Now, go away—over to your chair, and I'll let you know when I want you to help me again."

"You won't forget that they are *Nubian* slaves?"

"No. I have it all down on my mental cuff."

He waved her away and began to write, without looking to see whether she obeyed him or not. He took it for granted that she would do as she was told.

It was difficult for Marjorie not to continue the conversation. She had been so interested in the little scene they had rehearsed—not because it was the fruit of her own suggestion, but because it meant

progress for him. Now she found herself out of his confidence again—and it hurt her.

She could not repress a sigh as she moved slowly over to the window.

"Good gracious!" she suddenly murmured, under her breath, with a look at the church clock. "I did not think it was so late. I must get tea."

Swiftly but silently she set about her preparations. First, she removed the cushions from the trunk and opened it, took out a small white tablecloth. Then, placing the folding table opened up by the side of the stove, she spread the cloth and on it arranged teacups, a teapot, plates, forks, spoons, etc. In a remarkably short space of time the table was neatly set for two persons. And the best of it was that she had done it all without the least sound.

Tony Quintard, deep in his work, seemed quite unaware of what was going on across the room. He never looked in her direction at all, and it pleased her that she had been able to do all this without disturbing him.

"He works so hard that it would be a sin to annoy him ever so little," she thought.

From her basket she took the good things that were to go with the tea. There was half a baked ham, some salad, a bottle of olives, a jar of marma-

lade, a plate of sandwiches and a very attractive cake.

Having disposed these delicacies neatly on the table, she brewed the tea, and soon the attic was fragrant with the odor of the comforting beverage.

Unfortunately at this stage of the proceedings, she accidentally knocked a spoon from the table. It fell to the bare floor with a terrifying jingle.

Instantly Tony sprang up with a howl.

"Upon my word! How can I work when you're making such a clatter?"

"It's time you stopped, anyhow," she interrupted, composedly. "You must have your tea."

"Tea! Tea! How can I get this job finished when you're always bothering to *feed* me?" he complained hotly.

"You can't work without being fed."

"I can't work when I'm *stuffed*."

Marjorie's sense of justice moved her to reply rather sharply:

"If you—you stuff yourself, it is not my fault."

"I don't stuff myself!" retorted Tony, sharply. "It's you! You're forever making me eat. Why, you've kept me so stuffed for the past week that half the time my brains have utterly refused to work."

Marjorie stamped her little foot impatiently.

"It isn't true. They've worked better than ever. You said so yourself."

"Now you've upset me so that I can't work," he bellowed angrily.

But if he expected sympathy on this score, he soon found that he was mistaken. Marjorie knew that she could not afford to pity him. If she did, he never would consent to have tea. Her voice was as hard as she could make it when she retorted:

"I'm glad of it!"

"Don't you realize that I must have this thing done to-night?" he demanded with great indignation.

"You'll finish it much better if you stop and have your tea first."

"For heaven's sake, let me finish it now," he entreated in a tone of intense exasperation, "while I am in the mood!"

"You're not in the mood now. . . . And, the tea will spoil!"

"Oh, hang the tea!" shouted Tony. "Here I am, trying my best to keep myself in the atmosphere of romance, and you keep dragging me out of it into the commonplace of material things. If you'll leave me alone for five minutes, I'll be through."

Tony had his own way. When she saw that he was absolutely determined she retired from the contest.



"Five minutes will do it," he grunted, contentedly,  
as he resumed his work.

She did not answer.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### PRIMROSE AS CUPID.

**T**ONY QUINTARD made a neat pile of his manuscript after a while, and, as he did so, remarked cheerfully, without looking at Marjorie:

"There! It's done! Didn't have to change a word in the last few pages. Awfully good typewriting! Do you know, you could make your living—"

It was just as he reached this point in his jubilation that his eyes roved across the attic in search of the girl who had helped him so loyally in his task.

"Good Lord!"

She was sitting upon the cushions on the floor, and her arms rested on the trunk, supporting her head. Her soft hair was all Tony could see. Her face was hidden in her arms. She was just a miserable little huddle. He saw that she quivered with sobs from time to time.

He ran to her and touched her shoulder.

"Why, what's the matter?" he asked. "What's wrong?"

There was no response, and Tony stood up with a puzzled expression, which soon changed to one of remorse. Now that the immediate glamor of the opera rolled away from him, he became vaguely suspicious of himself.

What had he done? He ruffled up his hair in his desperation and again bent over her.

"Why, I must have hurt you! But you know I didn't mean to. When I am working I am not a fit companion for a—a prehistoric monster!"

He dropped on one knee by her side, gently endeavoring to see her face.

"I'm terribly sorry," he went on, earnestly. "And you've been so wonderful to help me with my opera. I don't know what I should do without you! I'm so impatient, so restless, all day until you come. Why, you're just the dearest little pal in the world! And when you're gone, I'm terribly, terribly lonely. The only thing that cheers me then is the thought that you are coming again to-morrow."

The sincerity and tenderness with which he said this was irresistible. At least, Marjorie found it so. Shyly, she put forth a hand. He covered it with his own, and for a moment held it without speaking. At

last she looked up at him tearfully, and he burst out:

"You poor little thing! You've been crying!"

"No!"—sob—"no, I haven't!"

She wiped her eyes on her apron, fighting back the tears.

"I'm a beast!" he declared, vehemently.

"No—no, you're not. It's all—all right now."

"You forgive me?"

"Yes, of course."

She was smiling now, and Tony seemed to feel his heart leap as he saw it. If he had stopped to think he might have marveled that a girl's mood could have such an effect upon him. But it was characteristic of him to take things for granted, and he did not trouble to analyze his feelings. Instead, he gently raised Marjorie to her feet and led her to where the table was set for tea.

"Ah, that's like my dear little Fairy Godmother! Now what do you say to tea? You know, *I'm* starving! Everything looks so good!"

His eye fell upon her open work-basket, and he lifted from it the sock she had been darning. Examining it carefully, he exclaimed:

"By Jove! You've been darning my socks!"

"Yes," she confessed in timid tones.



"It's a beautiful piece of work," he declared, holding the sock closer to his eyes and turning it over to admire it from all points of view.

"You—you think it is all right?" she asked, with shy pleasure.

"Right? It's marvelous! I don't see how you do it. I know how hard it is. . . . I've tried it myself."

Her appreciative little laugh was good to hear, and when Tony joined in with a full, round "Ha, ha!" laughter quite brushed away the last remnant of their little difference.

He placed the camp-chair for her at one side of the table and made her sit down. Then he brought his own chair to the other side and smiled comfortably.

"You know, I am famished!"

"I'm afraid this tea is too strong," she remarked, as she poured out a cup.

"Not for me," declared Tony. "But perhaps you'd better have a little hot water in yours."

He was as full of interest in the tea as he had been in his opera a little while before. Jumping up, he brought the kettle and poured some water into Marjorie's cup. As he returned from replacing the kettle on the stove, he said solemnly:

"That is one of the handsomest hams I've ever seen."

"I hope you will like it."

"I shall, I know. How could I help it? I'm beginning to feel like a party. . . . You don't know what a relief it is to me to get that job off my chest."

Before she could respond, they were startled by three distinct knocks on the door at the foot of the stairs. Tony recovered at once.

"That's Primrose! He's crazy about you. I'll have to let him come up for a minute." Then, raising his voice, he called: "Come in!"

"I shall be glad to see any one who is as good to you as he is," said Marjorie, handing Tony a cup of tea.

It was now that Primrose appeared. He was smiling, apologetic and somewhat embarrassed.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered in his husky tones. "I—I was comin' up to see if—if the oil stove was burnin' all right."

"I think you'll find that it is behaving itself perfectly," laughed Tony.

Primrose shuffled over to the stove and turned his back to it. As the grateful warmth permeated his being, he smiled and folded his hands beatifically in

front of him. Then he bobbed to Marjorie, beaming on her benevolently.

"How-de-do, miss? I hopes you're feelin' as good as usual."

"Yes, thank you. How are *you*, Primrose?"

"If I was feelin' bad—which I ain't—it'd cure me, the sight of you and Mr. Quintard sittin' here together at the table," he replied. Then he added, with a still more expansive smile: "It do look so cheery and affable! Like a little man and his wife, you know."

Tony laughed heartily. He saw only the absurdity of such an idea. Then, as he glanced at Marjorie, he became aware that her cheeks were aflame with embarrassment, and that she was dropping lump after lump of sugar into her teacup without knowing what she was doing.

Meanwhile, the devoted Primrose rambled on, in his monotonous way:

"I often says to myself—I says: 'Now, wouldn't it be nice if them two——'"

Tony felt that now was the time to stem the tide of Primrose's moralizing. He attempted it by offering the old man a plate of sandwiches.

"Have a sandwich, Primrose! Have a sandwich!"

"Thank you, very kindly, sir."

Primrose accepted the sandwich. Then, as he gave signs of being about to break out again on the awkward subject just where he had been interrupted, Marjorie hastily cut off a huge slice of cake and tendered it to him.

"You'll have a piece of cake, won't you?" she asked, sweetly.

"Thank you, miss. . . . As I was sayin', you and Mr. Quintard——"

"Let me pour you a cup of tea," she interposed, as Primrose, sandwich in one hand and slice of cake in the other, seemed determined to keep on talking. "You'll have some tea?"

"If you'd be so——"

Primrose chanced to glance at Tony at this juncture, and was puzzled to see that the young man was shaking his head violently and motioning toward the stairs. What he meant, the old man could not tell.

"If you'd be so kind, miss, as—as——" But the mysterious signals were still going on. So in desperation, Primrose turned to Tony and asked, in rather more distinct tones than usual: "What is it you're wantin', sir?"

"Oh!" groaned Tony, under his breath, adding, aloud, to Primrose: "Nothing! nothing! I was only



thinking that the Great She-Bear—well, you know! She's likely to be looking for you."

It was a lucky thought of Tony's. Well he knew that dread of the Great She-Bear was deeply implanted in his humble friend's bosom, and that the thought of her catching him idle even for a minute dismayed him to the point of panic. Primrose started in terror and glanced apprehensively down the trap.

"I'm obliged to you for thinking of it, sir," he acknowledged, forgetting everything else for the moment. "She's in a fierce humor to-day. I guess I'd better be going." He waved the cake and sandwich and bobbed to Marjorie. "Thank you very much, miss."

"I hope you'll come to-morrow, Primrose," she responded, smiling; "at tea-time."

"If you don't mind," returned the highly gratified Primrose. "Thank you! Thank you! Good-day, miss!"

He shuffled slowly down the stairs. As the door closed, Tony leaned back in his chair and looked at Marjorie—who, her head bent, was sipping her tea—with more earnestness and curiosity than ever he had displayed before.

It seemed to have occurred to Tony suddenly that

this unknown girl who had done so much for him might have thoughts and aspirations aside from the opera—in which, after all, there was no reason for her taking such a deep interest. It was not *her* opera.

He had reached this point in his musings when she happened to look up, meeting his eye. Evidently she was surprised at the thoughtful, steady way in which he was regarding her. A questioning little smile tilted the corners of her mouth. Then, as he continued to look at her without speaking, she dropped her own eyes in embarrassment.

It was the first time the Cinderella-man had seemed to consider her in any other light than as an automatic adjunct to his operatic masterpiece.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### "THE GATEWAY OF DREAMS."

"**Y**OUR tea is cold, I'm afraid."

He did not reply, and she had the teapot in her hand, about to pour some tea into his cup when he held up a hand to stop her.

"Do you know," he said, very seriously, and as if he never had thought of it before, "that you've told me very little about yourself."

She put down the teapot and looked at him, wondering what was coming. After a pause, he went on:

"You're almost as much alone in the world as I am, aren't you?"

"Almost."

Her tone was very subdued, and she could not keep her eyes on his now. He saw that she was breathing fast, and he knew that his question had somehow struck home.

"I don't often think of things like this," he continued; "but, if I should die to-night, it wouldn't affect a single soul."



There was a world of pity in her eyes as she turned them to him for a fleeting instant. But she did not speak.

"If anything should happen to *you*," he went on, more softly than before, "is there anyone who would care very much?"

"No. . . . Not *now*!"

"Ah, but there *was* some one?"

"Yes."

"Recently?"

For a few moments she did not answer, and Tony, knowing that she would speak at last—when she could—waited.

"My—mother!" she whispered.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tony, sympathetically. "I didn't know. . . . I'm awfully sorry." He was silent for a while. Presently: "It's been a long time since I lost my mother. But I still miss her. . . . So I—so I know how—how sad and lonely you must be."

Her lips quivered, and there was a mournful little smile on them as she returned:

"I am—sometimes!"

"It's worse—at night— isn't it?"

"Yes."

Another pause, during which Tony seemed to for-



get where he was, for he broke out, suddenly, with an attempt at lightness:

"My mother made such a darned baby of me!"

"Of course she did," responded Marjorie, with conviction.

"Yours must have made a—a bigger baby of you."

"I don't know," was her reply. "But I can't get used to going to sleep without having her tuck me in. . . . And I—I put her to bed myself for her last—last sleep, away—away—over there—all alone—in France—and I'm here!"

Not much wonder that her head drooped and the tears came into her eyes. That day in Nice, when she returned from her shopping trip, full of the joy of life, to find her mother stricken, came back to her as plainly as if she were living it all over. She covered her face with her hands.

Tony felt suddenly miserable. A wave of sympathy for Marjorie swept over him, but it was not just sympathy that suddenly made him see her with new vision.

He drew from his pocket a folded white handkerchief, shook it out, and silently slipped it into her hand. She looked up at him and smiled. Then she daubed at her eyes with his handkerchief, and he looked and looked at her as if he were seeing her

for the first time. When he did speak, it was to say, very slowly:

*"Do you know anything about marrying?"*

Marjorie gazed up at him, waiting for some explanation. He vouchsafed none, but looked deep down into her eyes, filled with the wonder of his discovery.

"You have the most wonderful eyes!" he murmured, slowly.

Without waiting for her to speak, he strode over to the window and looked out at the snow-covered roofs for a moment. Then he came back and, standing behind her, slowly put out a hand as if he would touch her hair. But he changed his mind and, instead, thrust both hands into his pockets, drew them out, and counted his store—seventeen cents! He gazed hopelessly about the room.

Marjorie turned to him. But he did not seem to notice her movement, for he walked over to his table and began to finger the manuscript of his opera.

"I wonder if this thing is any good?" he said, aloud—"The Gateway of Dreams!"

"The Gateway of Dreams?" she asked, with quick interest.

"Didn't I tell you?—that's the title I've given the opera. It came to me last night."

"It's an inspiration!" cried Marjorie.

"H'm! Yes! But you never heard of a man marrying on 'inspiration.' " He looked at her fixedly. "Yes, all I could offer a girl to-day would be just a little—inspiration. It can't be done!"

Marjorie had come to the table now—near enough to Tony to touch him, if she had desired. She looked at him as steadily as he had at her a moment before, and asked, with strained calmness:

"Wouldn't it be a sensible idea if you were to marry a girl with a little money of her own?"

"No—no—I wouldn't marry a girl with money," maintained Tony.

His quiet steadfastness to that idea made her shrink away, but she did not yield her point.

"Some awfully nice girls come that way," she reminded him. "There's the Princess——"

"Oh—please!" begged Tony.

"It isn't fair for you to be so prejudiced against her," she fenced. "The Princess is the same sort of girl that—that I am."

"Oh, you're worth a million princesses!"

There could be no doubt about the sincerity of this conviction. She knew Tony meant exactly what he said, and yet—considering everything—it was with some misgivings that she thanked him for his opinion.

Tony, quite unaware that there was anything equivocal in what he had said, gazed after her admiringly as, moving back to the tea-table, she took the kettle from the stove to replenish the teapot.

"Do have some hot tea?" she suggested, hurriedly.

But Tony's mind was far away from tea by this time. He had been following a line of thought of which he could not see the end, and yet—which *might* lead him to happiness.

"If I *should* win the prize——"

He had spoken more to himself than to Marjorie. But she caught it and replied, with quick encouragement:

"I'm sure you will. You must!"

"You have great faith in the opera, haven't you?" he said.

"It can't fail!" she replied, in a positive tone.

"In that case," mused Tony, "I should have ten thousand dollars." Then, hopefully: "A man could marry on ten thousand—couldn't he?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" was her prompt answer.

She peeped into the teapot, to save herself the necessity of looking at Tony. He was leaning across the table, his face not many inches from her own.

"And my prospects would be mighty good," he continued. "Especially, if the opera made a hit."



"I think your prospects are awfully good now," as she poured him a cup of tea.

"That's all very well," he returned, with a business-like air. "But a man must have some ready money. He can't ask a girl to take chances."

"A girl is always glad to—to take chances"—here she handed Tony his teacup—"when she's sure she is taking them with the right man."

"Ah! That's the marvelous thing about girls. But a man doesn't like to ask them to take chances."

"You mustn't treat us as if we were perishable freight," she smiled. "Though we like to have you think of us that way—sometimes."

"It would be the most wonderful adventure," he exclaimed, dreamily.

"To sail into life," she went on, "with nothing but love for a boat!"

"But you can't sail without wind," he continued, with a comical expression of dismay. Then, in determined accents: "By Jove! That opera of mine shall raise the wind for me. 'The Gateway of Dreams'!"

"The Gateway of Dreams!" she echoed.

Tony arose from his chair, and holding his teacup above his head, as if proposing a toast, cried: "To you, little Fairy Godmother!"

Entering laughingly into the spirit of the conceit, Marjorie clinked her cup against Tony's, as she repeated his words, "To the success of 'The Gateway of Dreams'!"

It was at this precise instant that the censorious visage of the Great She-Bear came up the trap, her angry eyes fixed upon Marjorie.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A SHATTERED PARADISE

**S**O sudden and unexpected had been the appearance of the Great She-Bear that, for several seconds, Tony and Marjorie stood perfectly still, their teacups touching, while they gazed at this creature who had so rudely broken into their Eden.

Furious as she was, a touch of grim pleasure revealed itself in the face of the Great She-Bear. The landlady prided herself on her perspicacity. She often boasted that nobody could fool her, and most of her time was occupied in trying to make such a thing impossible.

Since she had seen how much more comfortable and decorative Tony's garret was, and especially after discovering the chiffon scarf on the young man's table, she had decided that "something was wrong" with her lodger.

What that "something" was she suspected to be of the feminine gender. The scarf was part of a wo-

man's attire, and she had shrewdly concluded that only a woman could have converted that attic into such a cheery and comfortable domicile.

Therefore, as she appeared, with all the ominousness of the evil genius in a pantomime, rising, towering up through the trap, and found herself staring at Marjorie Caner, she congratulated herself upon her acumen.

"Mr. Quintard, take that girl out of here!" she rumbled. It was her opening explosion, giving promise of heavier detonations yet to come.

Taken unaware, Tony was for a moment utterly bewildered. Expressions of astonishment and puzzlement, rather than alarm, at first flickered across his expressive face; but as he met the baleful, Puritanical and steady glance of the Great She-Bear, a sensation of apprehension swept over him. Instinctively he put down his cup and held out a protecting arm to Marjorie. She, herself had started up at the first sound of that ominous command, uttered by the intruder. Innocent as the girl was, entirely lacking in experience with people of the Great She-Bear's narrow and venomous type, her instinct gave her some inkling of the deeper significance of the sneer on the woman's coarse mouth, of the menace in her sullen eyes. Instinctively, too, she caught the hand



that Tony held out to her, and her first fears were somewhat lulled by his reassuring look of protection. Her response was a slight tightening of her slim fingers on his hand.

That pressure upon his hand brought Tony to a realization of the catastrophe which had overtaken them. At the same time his blood began to mount hotly to his head. As he turned his shocked and indignant face to the Great She-Bear, he heard her repeat, menacingly:

"I want you to get out of here, and take that girl with you! Now I know what's been goin' on up in this attic."

For the moment, Tony's power of utterance had deserted him. All he could say was a threatening: "Hush! Hush!"

But the Great She-Bear was not to be hushed so readily. "You take that girl out of here!" she reiterated, with more vehemence than ever. "This is a decent house, and I'm a respectable woman!"

The full force of the woman's horrible misunderstanding struck him, like a blow. "You don't know what you're saying," he expostulated, in a low, trembling tone.

"I'm saying that I won't have a lodger of mine carrying on in his rooms with a hussy!"

"How dare you!" cried Tony. If the Great She-Bear had been a man he would have throttled her. It was all he could do to restrain himself.

"She's a hussy! That's what she is!" She pointed a grimy, gnarled finger at Marjorie.

"Stop, I say—stop!" Tony took a step toward her, his hands clenched, while Marjorie, retreating across the room, piteously held her hands to her ears.

"Where do you think you are?" The voice of the Great She-Bear became more vehement. "I won't have such goin's on up here, I tell you. You'll get out of my house, you and that——"

Tony's self-control collapsed suddenly. "Get out of my room!" he cried.

"Take her where she belongs!" shouted the landlady, throwing down Marjorie's scarf which she plucked out of her apron pocket. "I guessed what was doin' up here when I found that thing!"

"Get out of my room, you evil-minded beast, with your rotten respectability!" Tony was trembling with rage.

"It's my room!" shrilled the woman.

Tony towered above her, the personification of righteous wrath, while his voice rose hysterically: "Don't speak! You've done your work! I'll leave this place to-night, but you—you leave *now*! Get out

—get out—you beast, or I'll throw you down those stairs!"

The Great She-Bear's face turned a dingy white. She saw plainly then that Tony meant what he said. She turned, with baffled anger and muttering inaudible imprecations, and slowly descended the stairs. In a moment they heard the door slam below.

When Tony at last turned to Marjorie, he found her standing by his writing table, pale, distracted, horrified. She met his gaze, which begged forgiveness, with a piteous look of affection.

At first she had not comprehended the vile insinuations of that terrible woman. The baleful, sordid idea was too dreadful to penetrate her frank consciousness. Then it had struck her, all at once—hideously.

She looked heart-brokenly at Tony. As he returned her gaze, he felt that this was the end of their wonderful companionship in the attic. Beyond that he could not see.

Slowly he put her things into the work-basket and dropped the socks she had been mending into the trunk. He picked up the scarf and saw her shiver. He knew that she could never touch it again. He folded it mechanically and laid it away—out of her sight. He gathered up her cloak, draped it gently

about her shoulders, and slowly opened the window. She had followed him. Neither had spoken. They could not speak. There were tears in her eyes. There were tears in his. He gave her his hand. She took it, held it closely to her. It was evident that she longed for him to take her in his arms. He had never been so tempted, but he knew it wasn't fair. He tenderly put her from him and helped her over the window ledge.

Marjorie stood there on the roof, still clasping his hand across the sill. He stopped, kissed her hand, and let her go. For an instant their eyes met, and their hearts spoke "Farewell!"

Suddenly she turned, with a little sob, and went swiftly over the snow-covered roof, turned the corner of a chimney, and was gone.

Tony closed the window slowly, leaned both arms against the casement, his head bent and his face pressed against the cold panes.

Then it came to him, with heart-breaking poignancy, that their little paradise was shattered. A veil had been drawn across his stars, his dream-city was gone. He would never, never see it again!



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### LOVE SEEKS THE WAY.

**D**AYS, then a week, passed. Time moved with heavy feet, and the littlest hours were dreary ones for Marjorie. She had tried to settle down to the dull routine of her father's house after that darkling afternoon when she had parted from her Cinderella-man. She had not seen him since, but, through a single visitation of the faithful Primrose, who had timorously sought her out, she had learned that Tony was moving from the rookery next door.

It was early in the evening. Marjorie had just come into the drawing-room, wearing the fluffy white gown which set off her dainty prettiness so charmingly. She had found the big place empty, and, hardly knowing what she did, glided over to the window near the piano. It was from this window that she had caught her first sight of the glow from Tony's dormer.

There was no light there now, and as she looked, she felt as though her heart were crying.

The fact was that Marjorie was so unhappy that she had begun to show it. Even Doctor Thayer, who had been called in consultation to minister to her listlessness and loss of appetite, had failed to make a satisfactory diagnosis.

It was the coming of this same good doctor that disturbed her melancholy reverie now. As Blodgett announced him, the girl made a gesture of distraction and slipped behind the heavy draperies of the window.

"I don't want to see him, Blodgett!"

"Very well, miss."

Blodgett made this response meekly enough, but he pointed to the curtain as Doctor Thayer came toward the piano, and departed, with the feeling that he had done his full duty.

"Well," remarked the doctor, looking at the window drapery, "I've had patients hate me so that they pulled the bed-clothes over their heads at the sight of me. But I've never had one wrap herself up in the drawing-room curtains. . . . Come, now! Stick out your tongue and I'll be satisfied!"

There was no response. So, after waiting a moment, he thrust the curtain aside and seizing Marjorie playfully by the arm, drew her out of the recess.

"Please leave me alone," she pleaded. "I am not your patient."

"Oh, yes, you are. I'm the house physician. I attend everything in it, from the Great Mogul himself—down to the cat."

"We haven't a cat now," she corrected him. "I gave it away. It frightened the canaries."

"But we have a kitten," he rejoined, laughing. "And the Great Mogul telephoned me that the kitten was sick."

"If you mean me, I'm not sick."

"You're not feeling very frisky, my dear. You've lost your appetite, and you won't go out, even in your brand-new, big red car."

"A red car!" she broke in, listlessly.

"Ah! You don't like the color of it? We'll have it changed. What do you say to a nice sky-blue?"

"I don't want a car," she declared, wearily. "I don't want any of those horrid expensive things. I don't want to be rich. I want to be poor."

"Then you are sick!" replied the doctor, with conviction. "Now—this loss of appetite. We'll have to stimulate your desire for food a little—humor your palate. To begin with, I'm going to give you a tonic. It is very pleasant to the taste." He began to write a prescription. "Your father says you ate no dinner to-night! I'm going to order you a supper to be

eaten on top of this nice cocktail I'm mixing for you."

"I don't like cocktails," she interrupted, "and why should I eat if I'm not hungry?"

"Here is what you are to have," he went on cheerfully. "Clam broth, white meat of the chicken, asparagus tips on toast, and, if you like, you may have vanilla ice-cream and lady-fingers. No tea—no coffee. I put you on your honor. I'll tell Blodgett, as I go out, to give your menu to the chef! The prescription I'll leave at the drug store myself and have it sent around to you in a jiffy!"

He held out his hand. She took it with a smile, saying: "Thank you for coming!"

"A pleasure, I'm sure! Now, be a good girl," he admonished; "take your medicine and eat only what I've ordered. I'll drop in again to-morrow." Marjorie made a wry face. "Good-night," he concluded, laughing at her. "My regards to your father."

Alone again, Marjorie walked slowly back to the casement, and settled there into the cushions, with chin upturned to the attic, like a drooping little white flower to the sun.

Presently the voice of Blodgett, announcing a visitor, disturbed her. The butler was saying, with pronounced superciliousness: "Miss Marjorie, that old



person from next door—is here again. He insists—he must see you!”

The girl turned eagerly. “Yes, yes! Where is he? I want to see him—at once.”

Blodgett was too well-trained to make an exhibition of his feelings, but he plainly disapproved. He shook his head surreptitiously as he returned to usher in the shy and shabby visitor.

It was Primrose, of course. He regarded the dignified Blodgett with some awe but no admiration. He had a thorough knowledge of the superiority vested in that individual by the great Morris Caner, but there was something which the old man thought unnecessarily disagreeable about him. He held the belief that, but for the ill turns of fortune, he was quite as good intrinsically as that well-fed butler. As a matter of fact, Primrose could remember when he was still better fed, certainly more smart. With that thought he straightened himself up and made quite a dignified entrance into the drawing-room, despite the fact that he wore the dilapidated overcoat which a festive master many years before had sported at the races, and carried a quaint old derby out of fashion these many years. They were ancient friends, however, and had served him well through innumerable winters.

Apparently Primrose had given more than casual attention to his appearance. His mop of grey hair was plastered down severely, and his wrinkled face shone as clean and as bright as a polished door-knob. For the moment he would have been quite happy were it not for the presence of that disturbing, not to say overbearing, butler.

A broad smile of simple adoration adorned his face as he saw Marjorie coming toward him. He bobbed to her respectfully.

"Good evenin', miss," he began. "Mr. Quintard says to me——"

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you," she greeted him. "I've been so anxious!"

"Mr. Quintard says to me," repeated Primrose, determined that he should not forget one syllable of that important message, "he says: 'you go across the room and leave 'em at her window.'"

Whereupon he extracted from a cavernous pocket of the great coat a pathetic-looking bunch of violets. It was a small bunch, and crumpled, but still fresh. The old man gave the flowers a shake to straighten them out again, and placed them in the girl's willing hand.

On the verge of tears, Marjorie took the violets and held them closely to her cheek for a moment.

then slipped them into the girdle of her dress.

"You see," continued Primrose, "Mr. Quintard didn't know I was goin' to see you. He doesn't know I've ever seen you since—he moved, that night."

"He is quite comfortable now—with your sister-in-law?" she asked.

"With my sister-in-law's aunt," corrected Primrose. "Yes, miss. It's a very clean little garret he has there, but I do miss the sight o' your curtains and fixin's. And he has a fine view from his window, too. At night he can see one of them big advertising signs. It's a bottle of beer"—Primrose's tone grew warm—"pourin' itself into a glass."

"That must be very interesting," she smiled.

"It is. It's so natural. It makes me thirsty to look at it."

"Oh, by the way, Primrose, you must give me Mr. Quintard's address. I want to return his manuscript."

Marjorie took a pencil from the table and prepared to write.

Primrose glanced sideways to see if she was ready.

"It's McDougal alley, miss—number 417——"

"417," she repeated, as she wrote it down.

"And a half," he added.

"Oh, 417 and a half McDougal alley?"

"That's right, miss."

She took out her pocketbook and in silence offered a five-dollar bill to him. He shook his head in smiling refusal.

"It's very good of you, and I thank you kindly, miss," he said. "But it's no use."

"No use? Why not?"

"Well, miss," explained Primrose, with the air of one who had a rather difficult story to tell, "you know that ten dollars you gave me for him?"

"Yes."

"Well, I tried to get him to borrow it off me—and he wouldn't; and off my sister-in-law's aunt—and he wouldn't. But the next day I had an idea. You know when people die their names are put in the papers. Sometimes a bit o' poetry goes with 'em. So I says to Mr. Quintard: 'A friend o' mine has jus' died an' his wife'll give ten dollars if you'll write a piece o' poetry about him, tellin' what a great man he was and what a loss he'd been to his family, so she can stick it in the papers.' And Mr. Quintard bit, miss—he did! He got the ten dollars—he earned it! I've got the poetry. Every time I read it, it makes me cry. I'm goin' to keep it an' have it stuck in the papers when I croak!"

As Primrose finished this original narrative, he put



a corner of the precious many-colored handkerchief to his eyes.

"What a dear old fraud you are," said Marjorie gently. "You must take this money. You're so ingenious, you can surely find a way to make him accept it!"

"But he ain't needin' it now, miss," protested Primrose. "The rent ain't much, and he don't eat nothin' to speak of. Would you believe it, his appetite is so poor——"

The old man broke off suddenly, as from the tail of his eye he glimpsed the austere Blodgett, who had silently entered the room, bearing a small tray with a bottle on it which had every appearance of being fresh from the drug store. This he now offered Marjorie, with never a glance in Primrose's humble direction.

"Your medicine, Miss Marjorie!"

She took the bottle and dismissed the butler. She seemed to be thinking. "You say Mr. Quintard's appetite is poor, Primrose?"

"Werry poor, miss! You wouldn't believe it, but he turns up his nose at boiled beef and cabbage. He don't care nothin' for food no more!"

Marjorie quickly unwrapped the medicine bottle and her manner reflected the professional air of her

father's physician. "We'll have to stimulate Mr. Quintard's desire for food," she declared, "and at the same time make things easy for his tummy. To begin with, we'll give him this tonic. Tell him it's pleasant to the taste. The directions are there. I've only scratched off my name."

The old man thanked her and put the bottle in his pocket.

"Now, we must humor his palate," she went on. "For supper to-night, we'll give him clam broth clear, the white meat of chicken, asparagus tips on toast, vanilla ice-cream and lady-fingers."

Primrose was nonplussed. "But where am I to get them, miss?"

"Come back in an hour and I'll have Mr. Quintard's supper ready for you. You could take it to him in a basket, couldn't you?"

"I could, miss—only——" He hesitated. "I'm afraid the Great She-Bear won't leave me off!"

Marjorie looked girlishly imperious, every inch a Caner. "Then you must leave her," she commanded. "I intended to speak to you about this before. I want to engage you as my footman—to run errands for me, bathe the canaries, exercise the dogs, and keep the squirrels from fighting. I don't know the wages of a footman, but you shall have them."

"Oh, miss," cried the grateful Primrose, clasping his hands in ecstasy. "It would be like heaven to be your footman. I—I——"

But he could not go on. Tears were always rather near the surface with him and he let them flow freely now.

"Your footman! Your footman!" he sobbed.

"There, there, Primrose! Don't cry!" begged Marjorie. "You're engaged. You must take this five dollars. It is for you. The basket, with the supper, will be ready in an hour. And—and I want you to come and see me to-morrow at noon."

"Thank you—thank you very kindly, miss."

Primrose would probably have said much more. But at this instant, through his mist of tears, he saw Morris Caner and Romney Evans come into the room, and he felt that retreat was indicated.

Even when he was out of the room, however, seeking the servants' hall to wait for the supper that was to be ready in an hour, he still kept on repeating rapturously: "Her footman! Her footman!"

There was at least one happy person in the great Caner house that evening.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### MORRIS CANER HEARS A CONFESSION.

**W**HAT'S that old ragamuffin doing here?" demanded Caner, irritably. "Who is he?" "I've engaged him as my footman," replied Marjorie, calmly.

Her reply did not soothe the ruffled millionaire.

"Good Lord!" he stormed. "You don't suppose I want a tramp like that about my house?"

"That will be all right, Morris," put in Romney Evans, laughing. "He'll take charge of the menagerie."

"Menagerie! Yes!" grumbled Caner. "This thing has to stop! Every time I come down stairs, I fall over some strange animal."

Marjorie laughed mischievously, and half pushed, half-led her father to the big throne-chair in the middle of the room.

"I'm sorry, papa, but the puppies are all so young yet. When they grow up, they'll learn to keep out of your way."



Caner, growling and protesting, allowed her to push him into the big chair.

Then she lifted the big, round blue pillow in the chair behind him, gave it a few magic pokes and shakes that softened and plumped it out, and adjusted it to her father's back with a skill that brought from him a grunt of satisfaction.

"There, papa! That's better— isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," he returned grudgingly. "The way you fix them. But I don't like the things."

"That's because you haven't had any one to make you comfy. Now, put your poor foot on the stool!"

The good humored affection of the girl had thawed the ice-crust on Morris Caner's disposition— partly, at least. He allowed his daughter to lift his leg and arrange his rheumatic foot on the stool, while a not very hard smile came over his features.

Morris would not have confessed it but he found himself wondering why he had deprived himself of such an adorable companion for so many years? He was not the kind of man to confess that he ever made mistakes. But, watching the dainty, white-clad figure, as she hovered about him, ready to anticipate his every wish, he muttered deeply in his soul that she

was "every inch a Caner," and he was proud of her. But it was not in him to mention it.

Suddenly, with a girlish exclamation of pleasure, Marjorie darted from his side and vanished behind him. The fact that he could not easily move from the kingly throne, in which she had seated him, ruffled Caner anew.

"What is it, Marjorie?" he asked impatiently.

But the girl did not reply. Her quick ear had caught the sound of a welcome arrival. She was already in the hall and her voice rang out above Blodgett's discrete murmur:

"Oh, Papa Sewall! Papa Sewall!" she cried. "Tell me! Have you read Mr. Quintard's opera?"

Caner listened to Sewall's answering barytone: "Yes, my child! Old Papa Sewall has read it! So have the other members of the committee. I saw to that!" By this time the pair of conspirators were entering the room.

"What's that?" barked Caner from his chair.

"One moment, papa!" begged the daughter. Then, to Sewall: "Well? Well? What do you think of it? Isn't it wonderful?"

"I'm sorry," answered the composer. "The committee won't have it—the way it is!"

"Won't have it?" repeated Marjorie, her voice barely audible in her surprise and disappointment. "Why, that's impossible! It's too beautiful!"

"Fine! Fine!" agreed Sewall, heartily. "Yes, yes! That's what we all thought—until we come to the last act."

"The last act?"

"Yes. And what does your jackass of an author do then? He ruins his story by ending it tragically. The thing calls for a *happy* ending."

"But it does end happily!" protested Marjorie, puzzled.

"You're wrong! You're wrong! I'll prove it. I'll show you the original manuscript."

On the table lay the opera as it had left Tony's hands. Marjorie had been reading it that evening, as she had done many times during the past week. She snatched it up and brought it over to Sewall.

Morris Caner, keenly aware of the important bustle in which he had no part, shifted uneasily in his throne-chair, and called out, irritably:

"Marjorie! Marjorie! What's all this row about anyway?"

"Just a second, papa!" was her reply. "I'm busy!"

Caner relapsed into exasperated silence.

Sewall, with a casual wave to Caner, settled himself down on the davenport to read the manuscript. Caner regarded the proceeding with extreme disfavor.

"What's Marjorie got to do with the opera of a man I never heard of?" he grunted.

"I've had it typewritten for him," explained Marjorie.

"*You* had it typewritten for him?"

"Yes, papa dear! Grayson did it—perfectly!"

"Oh, you don't say!" Caner was sarcastic. "Neglected my business to typewrite an opera. And for whom, I'd like to know?"

"A friend of mine," said the voice of Romney, who had been sitting at the piano, abstractedly turning over sheet-music.

"A real man of talent!" chipped in Sewall.

"A' genius!" agreed Marjorie warmly.

"A genius, eh! What's his name?" Caner asked this sharply.

"Quintard," replied Romney.

"Anthony Quintard," supplemented Marjorie.

"Never heard of him!" was the final way in which the millionaire dismissed Tony as an unknown and unimportant individual.



"You *will* hear of him," said Sewall, emphatically, from the davenport.

"Yes, the whole world will," was Marjorie's assertion, her eyes bright with enthusiasm as she looked at the composer.

"Where did you meet him? That's what I want to know!" insisted her father. "Romney introduce you?"

"No," she answered.

"Yes," said Romney, simultaneously.

"Yes! No!" barked Caner. "What am I to believe?"

Romney came strolling over from the piano and stood in front of his ill-tempered friend.

"He's perfectly all right."

"He's a very nice young man," added Marjorie. "Isn't he, Romney?"

"The best in the world."

"Did you introduce them?" demanded Caner, addressing himself impatiently to Romney.

"I told them about each other."

"You see, papa," explained Marjorie. "We were neighbors. He lived next door——"

"There?" inquired her father with real surprise, pointing to the window.

"Yes. We—we became acquainted. It is only a step across the roof to his window."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Caner.

"Good work!" suddenly came from the lips of Albert Sewall, in reference to the opera in his hand.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE THRESHOLD OF ROMANCE.

“**D**ON'T you love the opera, Papa Sewall?” called out Marjorie, entirely forgetting her irate father for the moment.

“Fine!” returned Sewall, without lifting his eyes from the manuscript.

“I suppose you stood at your window, making eyes at him?” inquired Caner, returning to the charge.

“No,” returned Marjorie, ignoring the sarcasm, “I climbed across the roof to *his* window.”

“Romney!” exploded the millionaire, “the girl’s made a fool of herself!”

“Oh, piffle!” was all Romney vouchsafed in reply.

Marjorie looked in distress from one to the other as she asked naively:

“Have I done anything I shouldn’t?”

“Have you done anything you shouldn’t!” thundered her father. “You scrape acquaintance with this Quintard person in the most extraordinary manner!”



"It was the best way I knew," she protested.

"Perfectly good way!" pronounced Romney, coolly.

"I wonder what the man must have thought of you!" said Caner, with scandalized emphasis.

"He was very grateful to me. I helped him with his opera."

"It's a wonder he didn't make violent love to you."

"I wish he had."

Marjorie made this dreadful admission in a very low voice, but Morris Caner and Romney both heard it.

"Do you hear that, Romney?" yelled Morris. "Do you hear that?"

"She's honest," laughed Romney. "Like father."

"He never made the tiniest bit of love to me," said Marjorie, rather mournfully.

"Why didn't he?" demanded Caner, shifting his ground abruptly. "Doesn't he like your looks?"

"He likes my *eyes*," answered Marjorie, simply. "He said so."

"Oh, he likes your eyes?"

"But he's very poor—and fearfully proud."

"This chap's an artist!" ejaculated Sewall, still intent on the opera.

"Oh, Papa Sewall!" exclaimed Marjorie, taking a



step toward him, but stopping as her father's harsh tones fell on her ear.

"Artist?" he sneered. "Scribbler! After you for my money! Marjorie, I tell you, you shan't marry a beggarly——"

"Don't be alarmed," she interrupted. "He may be fond of me. But when he learns that I am your daughter, I'll never see him again!"

"Oh! He objects to your father, eh?" spluttered Caner. "Who does he think you are, anyway?"

"I told him I was the companion of your daughter. I had to. Tony does not want his wife to support *him*. He wants to support her. . . . Oh!" she cried, in sudden supplication: "Be a good, dear papa, *and disinherit me!*"

Morris Caner came bolting out of the throne-chair at this. He was accustomed to concealing his emotions—for business reasons. But this remarkable prayer of his inexplicable daughter had hurled him completely off his balance, and he could no longer bear to sit still.

"What?—what?" he gasped. "Say that again!"

"*Disinherit me!* Then I can go to Tony and tell him I haven't a penny in the world. So—so he'll just have to marry me."

"You're out of your mind!" shouted her father,

stalking up and down, regardless of his lame foot.  
"So is he!"

"You're out of your mind yourself, Morris," interposed Romney, in his exasperatingly cool way. "Take my advice. Disinherit Marjorie, and let her marry Quintard."

"I will *not* disinherit her!" bawled Caner.

"Oh, please do!" begged Marjorie.

"Look here!" said Romney, earnestly. "Any one who can make your daughter love him, is a man! Let her have her way. You won't make any mistake."

"I will *not* disinherit her!" repeated Caner.

"Oh, please do?" besought Marjorie.

"Good God! Isn't it bad enough to think of your marrying—going away from me—just when I've found that I want to—to have you near me?"

"Oh, papa!"

He took her hand and stroked it affectionately. Then, as if ashamed of what he seemed to think sentimental weakness, he dropped the hand and strode about the room before he continued, in a softer tone, as he faced her again:

"My dear, don't refuse me the one thing I can do for you. Let me look after you—make you happy.

I want to give you the biggest bank account of any girl in America!"

"Oh, dear, papa! You are going to spoil everything! Tony won't have me *rich*!"

"What right has this young snip to let a matter of money stand between him and a girl like you?" he thundered. "It's absurd!"

"No, it's common sense," interferred Romney. "Marjorie has found her own romance. Let her have it."

"And how did she find it?" retorted Caner. "By flirting with this young man on the roof! . . . Marjorie," he went on, sternly, "I positively forbid you to cross that roof again."

"Very well, papa. I won't." Then very demurely she added: "He's moved!"

Caner choked. He tried to speak, but couldn't.

Albert Sewall made a diversion at this awkward moment by coming from the davenport, slapping the manuscript of the opera with the backs of his long fingers.

"It's a little masterpiece!" he bubbled. "A masterpiece, I tell you!"

Marjorie jumped up and down, waving a hand over her head in delight.

"Oh, Romney! He likes it! He likes it!"

"But Quintard must restore the last act as it is here, or—or—I'll poison him!"

"You'll give him the prize, then?" said Romney, eager to commit the composer to any indiscretion, if it were only to Tony's advantage.

"The ten thousand dollars?" persisted Marjorie.

"I promise nothing," smiled Sewall. "I know these authors."

Blodgett, the phlegmatic, came into the drawing-room and stood silent for an instant. Then he announced, monotonously:

"A Mr. Quintard, to see Mr. Sewall."

Marjorie started breathlessly. "Tony!" The word came out of her heart, where it was the most familiar of all words.

She had already turned to run out of the room when her father laid a hand on her arm. His voice was not altogether unkind, but it was suspicious, as he asked:

"Marjorie, what is that young man doing here?"

"I sent for him," announced Romney. "And for a very good reason."

"H'm! More of your conniving," accused Caner. "I'll see this young man!"

"Oh, papa!"

"He asked for me—not you!" objected Sewall.



Caner turned on him with his autocratic way and retorted: "This is my house!"

Romney whispered slyly to Sewall, who countered with:

"But this is *my* affair! The young man wants to talk opera—not railroads."

"You can have Mr. Quintard when I've finished with him!" was Caner's dictum.

"I'll give you five minutes to finish him," laughed Sewall, as he left the room.

Marjorie looked from her father to Romney and back again, with a timid little sigh.

"Now, clear out—all of you!" Caner ordered.

"Papa! Please!"

"That means you, too, Marjorie!" was his reminder. Then, to Blodgett: "Ask Mr. Quintard to come in."

As Blodgett bowed and disappeared, Marjorie went up to her father and clung to his arm for a moment, as she looked pleadingly up into his face.

"You'll be very gentle with him, papa—won't you?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" he returned, impatiently. "Go away!"

"Marjorie!" called Romney, from the door leading to the library.

She followed Romney, but just before she went out she whispered into her father's ear:

"Don't let him know that I am Marjorie. He thinks I am his—his fairy godmother!"

"His what?"

There was still a bewildered look on Morris Cancer's face when, Marjorie and Romney having vanished, Blodgett ushered Tony Quintard into the drawing-room, with just such an expression as a Roman soldier might have worn while passing a Christian martyr into a den of lions.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### ON COMMON GROUND.

**N**OTWITHSTANDING the rigidity of Morris Caner's attitude, Tony Quintard seemed to be entirely at his ease. He smiled benignly on the multi-millionaire as he said, with boylish frankness:

"You don't look like a composer!"

"What do you think I look like?" was the cool rejoinder.

Tony indulged in a good long stare at the other's stern face, and shook his head, as he asked, smiling:

"Is that a fair question?"

"Evidently I am not making a favorable impression," was the millionaire's gruff comment.

"No, no. It isn't that," disclaimed Tony, hastily.

Caner, in his grim way, enjoyed the obvious discomfort of his caller. Tony had begun to realize that something was wrong somewhere.



"Well, I'm not a musician," shortly confessed Caner.

"I don't understand," returned Tony, looking about him. "Mr. Romney Evans sent his car after me with a message that I was to come here to meet Mr. Sewall, about my—my opera."

"Mr. Sewall will be here in a few minutes. I am Morris Caner!"

"Morris Caner?"

"Yes."

"This is your house?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" ejaculated Tony, who had recovered his equanimity now that he knew he was only talking to a money king—not to a great musician. "Do you know, I thought there was something familiar about this street as we drove up. I used to be a—a neighbor of yours."

"You don't say," responded Caner, cynically.

"Yes."

There was a pause, and Tony Quintard, burning with anxiety to learn the verdict of his opera, wished this man of millions would get out, to make room for somebody more interesting—Albert Sewall, the composer, to wit. But Caner showed no disposition to go. On the contrary, he leaned easily against the



immense grand piano with the air of one who had settled down for a long stay.

"Don't let me keep you, Mr. Caner!" said Tony, a trifle nervously. "And time, like yours, must be valuable, even in the evening."

"I have nothing else to do," interrupted Caner. Then, as Tony continued to pace between the piano and the fireplace, he said, abruptly and with a note of command in his tones: "Sit down!"

"Thanks!" Tony waited a moment while his host seated himself, and then dropped down on the carved stool that had recently supported the minnionaire's rheumatic leg.

There was silence for a few seconds, while Caner gazed at Tony, who returned the look just as steadily.

"You don't look like a poet," remarked Caner, abruptly.

"I hope not," laughed Tony.

"But you are a poet—aren't you?"

"I write verse, and other things."

"Think your work's pretty important—don't you?"

"I think it's pretty *good*—sometimes."

"Feel at all uncertain about your ability?"

"Not a bit," was the prompt rejoinder.

There was another little silence after this. Caner felt that he was not sweeping this confident young

fellow off his feet, as perhaps he had expected to do.

He returned to the charge with the quiet savageness that he had often found effective in dealing with men in Wall Street:

"A young man with your assurance ought to go into business."

"Not this young man," returned Tony, positively.

"You poets don't think much of the business man. I have heard that."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Caner. We think a lot of him. It's quite a stunt to make a pile of money. I've often wondered how it is done."

"I can tell you," snapped Morris, his face hardening. "Foresight! That's how I made my money—foresight! In my mind, I saw that steel would be the biggest thing in this country. I watched my chances—got in on the ground floor. It panned out bigger than I had even dreamed."

"Ah! Dreamed it!" exclaimed Tony, laughing, as if he thoroughly understood. "That's it! You dreamed it—imagined it! That's how we all begin. Poet or millionaire, it is the same story! We all see it here first of all."

He tapped his forehead, and Morris Caner nodded in acquiescence. This young man was interesting, at all events.

"Well, well, Mr. Quintard. That puts us in the same boat."

"Yes!" Tony's boyish laugh rang out. "I sing while you row."

"But your singing doesn't pay you as well as my rowing pays me," rejoined Caner, sagely, adding slyly: "You are a clever young man. You ought to marry into a wealthy family."

"Did you?" asked Tony, quickly.

The shot had struck home, it seemed, for Caner, rising suddenly and avoiding Tony Quintard's eye, replied with booming emphasis:

"No!"

Tony calmly crossed one knee over the other, watching the millionaire. Then he uncrossed it, and rising to his feet, said deliberately:

"That's how I feel about it, Mr. Caner."

The millionaire's back was toward Tony as the latter expressed his sentiments on matrimony. But, after a moment's hesitation, during which his mind was working busily, he turned around thoughtfully: "We were talking just now—about money," he continued with a more friendly tone. "Shall I tell you how I made mine?"

"You did tell me—just now. By foresight."

"That is true. But I mean to give you a few de-

tails. It might interest you. I made my start as a three-dollar clerk, in a little, one-horse steel concern. I lived on two dollars—saved one. It took me five years to buy my first coke-oven.”

“What on earth did you want with a coke-oven?”

“Evidently you don’t know much about the manufacture of steel.”

“Not a thing,” confessed Tony.

“Well, you can’t make a pound of steel without coke. I realized that the man who could control the output of coke would have the steel industry by the throat.”

“Ah!”

“In my mind, I saw the slopes and ridges of the Conemaugh Valley covered with my coke-ovens. Then I saw my own mills turning out my own rails, and my own locomotives hauling my own freight over my own roads!”

“Go on!” begged Tony. “It is an epic!”

“The coke was the basic idea—if you understand me!”

“Understand you? I should say I did,” enthused the young man. “It’s wonderful—stupendous, what you big fellows do! You’re all alike, you Captains of Industry. Coke-ovens, mills, railroads, bridges, tunnels, ships, canals! You create them all here!”



Tony tapped his forehead. "That's the way you express your imagination. It's the same with the artist who paints his picture, the poet who writes his song, the musician who composes his symphony. We all see it here—in our minds—first—our Conemaugh Valley lit with its coke-ovens!"

"I never thought of it that way," returned Caner, half-smilingly.

Tony warmed up to his theme. "Why do men like you care for art—fill your houses with beautiful things—go wild with enthusiasm when you've picked up a rare porcelain or a great canvas? It's simply one master taking off his hat to the genius of another!"

Caner was pleased. "That's a great tribute you pay us," he beamed. "If what you say is true—then men like us should stand together." He offered his hand to Tony. "It's a bargain? We're friends, m'son?"

Tony grasped the proffered hand warmly. "No wonder you're a big man," he said, happily.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE TURNING-POINT.

**A**S Tony and Caner stood there, hands clasped in the big drawing-room, Sewall impatiently burst in. He waved formal introduction, he scarcely heard the conventional mentioning of his own name as the millionaire turned Tony over to him.

"Confound you, my dear boy," he began without preface, "what the devil did you mean by spoiling the last act?"

"Don't you like it?" involuntarily asked Tony.

"Like it? No! Not at all! It will never do! You'll have to go back to the original."

The tempestuous way in which Sewall plunged into the heart of the matter warmed Tony to him.

"Of course—if you think it better," he promptly agreed. "I shall be delighted!"

"That's right! You are a good boy—and—leave the rest to me."

Caner had been listening with a smile. The composer always did amuse him—when he didn't annoy him—and he was pleased that Tony's opera had won favor. He broke in now with a chuckle:

"I'm going to see that Sewall gives you a good contract, Quintard. That's as important to you as the happy ending is to him."

"Oh, I guess that will be all right," laughed Tony, who could not see anything but sunshine all around him. "But," he asked, suddenly turning to Sewall: "How did you know about the happy ending?"

"I had a look at your original manuscript!"

"But—but——" stammered Tony, completely bewildered.

"It seems that my daughter's *companion* had the original manuscript in her possession," volunteered Caner.

"Oh, yes—yes! I see!"

"That was it," confirmed Sewall. "And she showed it to me."

"Why, then," broke in Tony, in a strange flutter that was not caused altogether by the bright prospects of his opera. "Then I—I owe all my good luck to her!"

"Without a doubt!" The composer was emphatic.

Tony stared vacantly at Albert Sewall, as if he did

not see him. Then, looking over at Caner, he asked, with point-blank innocence:

"I wonder if your daughter would be good enough to let Miss Mudge come down to see me?"

"Miss Mudge?" ejaculated Caner, while Sewall's lips moved silently as they uttered the same words inaudibly. "Miss Mudge?"

"Yes. I should like to thank her."

To do Caner justice, his sense of humor, always present in really great men, combined with the whimsical nature of the situation, induced him to "play the game." After one brief stare of amazement, he started to move toward the door.

"I'll see if my daughter can spare *Miss Mudge*," he said, over his shoulder, as he went out.

As soon as the millionaire had disappeared, Tony turned quickly to the composer and asked anxiously:

"You feel pretty sure that the opra will be a go?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" was the enthusiastic reply. "It will be a sensation! I'm so sure of it that I'll tell you what I'll do. If I cannot make those jackasses give you the prize, old Papa Sewall will take the book himself. He'll hand you a thousand dollars in advance—and much more, if you need it—until the royalties come in."

"That would be magnificent of you."



"It is nothing—nothing!" returned Sewall, carelessly. "But, wait a moment."

He took a card from his pocket and gave it to Tony.

"This is my address. You come to see me to-morrow, at noon. We'll go over the script together."

He shook hands heartily. The young man's face was aglow with happiness.

"I'm tremendously obliged to you, Mr. Sewall."

"Don't speak of it—don't speak of it, my boy!" chirruped the good-hearted composer, as he left the room.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE PRINCESS.

**T**ONY, in a happy frame of mind, wandered over to the piano, sat down and began fingering the keys without striking them. Presently his eye fell upon a sheet of manuscript music on the rack before him.

“My song!” he exclaimed, in wonderment, immensely pleased. He played it softly, humming the words to himself until, of a sudden, he became aware that he was not alone in the room. Glancing over the top of the piano, he saw a girl, all in filmy white, slowly approaching. He was fairly stunned. He rose, with the music held mechanically in his hand, and gazed at her, wide-eyed, breathlessly. He had never seen her look so beautiful.

She paused, shyly, and blushed a little at the thought that she had deceived this young man who stared at her with that wonder-light in his blue eyes. She felt guilty, remorseful. She only hoped it was

fair to deceive him, just a little, for happiness sake. But now, she was afraid—afraid that the truth would have to come out—afraid he would not forgive her.

As she paused, he took a step toward her. "You look like—a fairy princess—not a fairy god-mother," he exclaimed in a hushed tone of admiration.

It was a very shy little hand that fluttered into Tony's. That feeling of guilt oppressed her. She was timorously wondering what he would say when he found out that she was "the little rich girl next door."

Woman-like, she resolved to avoid confession as long as possible. She would trust to a good Providence to help her out. With that thought, some courage returned to her. She smiled a little at Tony, as she asked: "How are you, Mr. Cinderella-man?"

He did not hear the question. "How pretty you are!" he whispered. It was just what he was thinking, and it seemed to be the most important thing to say at that moment.

"I asked you how you were!" she countered, demurely.

"Oh!—I have been most miserable!" There was no doubting the truth of this statement. She saw misery in his eyes. He hastened to add: "But I'm very,

very happy now." And he held her hand tightly in his.

"About your opera?"

"I didn't mean that so much—though, of course, I'm happy about it! Sewall has accepted it!"

"I knew he would!" She had always had the greatest faith in him.

"I owe that to you!" The lover in him was speaking now.

Marjorie shook her head, and asked him seriously: "Why did you change it—the last act?"

He ran his fingers through his thick, curly hair, as he explained: "I was so unhappy—so fearfully unhappy—after you had gone that night—the old ending didn't seem right. I rewrote it out of my wretchedness."

"You—you missed me—a little?" The girl's voice was very low.

Tony looked directly into her eyes, as he answered: "Oh, yes, yes, yes! I never missed anyone so much, and I didn't know how I should ever see you again. It made me desperate! You can't understand how wonderful it is to—to be able—just to look at you once more!"

She laughed gently, happily. He loved her. Yes, he loved her. There was no doubt about that. She



raised the long lashes of her bright eyes just long enough for one glance to steal out.

"I'm glad—to see—you—again," she confessed.

With boyish impulsiveness, he took her arm, and led her to the settee below the piano. "Let's sit down and talk to each other." Marjorie hesitated. "You're free for a few minutes, aren't you?"

His question recalled to the girl the enormity of her deception. At the same time she thought of a way calculated to make her confession less difficult.

"Yes," she replied, "but don't you think it would be—be nice—if you were to meet the Princess?"

Tony's rejoinder was positively and emphatically negative, as he took hold of her arm and drew her down on the settee beside him: "No—no, thank you, I'd rather not—not now!"

What to say to him? How to begin? She must have a moment more to think. She saw the manuscript of the song, which he still kept in his hand. "What—have you there?" she asked, a little desperately.

"Oh, this? It's my song! I was wondering about it. It's dedicated to 'Marjorie'!"

"That's the Princess's name," she returned quickly. "She adores your song—she thinks it is the most

beautiful song she ever heard. So you see, you really mustn't hate her any more."

"I don't hate her," Tony protested. "It's only that I don't want to see anyone but—just you. I've only got room for you in my thoughts—in my heart!"

It was coming—the moment that she both longed for and dreaded. She turned a little away from him, so that he might not see the trouble in her eyes. There was a pause, which seemed to her like eternity. Then she heard his voice, very lowly and earnestly and movingly, asking:

"Will you marry me?"

"I'm not sure that you'll want to!" She rose as she said this, and moved a little away from him, her face still averted.

He followed her quickly. "Not want to?" he exclaimed, puzzled, surprised. "Why, dear little god-mother, I love you! It was all that I could do to keep from telling you so that last afternoon in the attic. But it didn't seem right then. I had nothing!" He smiled ruefully, thinking of the seventeen cents—all that he possessed in the world. "Seventeen cents—not a prospect! I didn't know how I could take care of you. And I've nothing yet! But," he went on sturdily, "it's coming. Sewall is confident that the opera will be a success. He's even going

to give me a thousand dollars in advance—that's one hundred thousand cents. So now I feel that I can ask you to marry me!"

She took another step away from him—toward the throne-chair. Her honest little heart was in a turmoil. "I wish I knew what I ought to do!"

"Do?" he cried, following her again, eagerly, reassuringly: "It's all very simple—if you love me. We could be married in the spring—and go away to the country—to a dear, clean little cottage I know of—on the edge of a hill." He had dreamed that cottage so well that it seemed real, down to the humming-bird that came every morning to visit the honeysuckle. "I'll have enough to keep us going till the royalties come in. We'd be happy there. What do you say, dear?"

"Oh, it sounds heavenly to me," she confessed, almost tearfully. In a moment he would have taken her in his arms, but she stopped him with a gesture. He seized the hand that checked him, and tried to look into her face, which she still kept turned away from him. "I should love keeping a little home like that for you," she went on. Then added, desperately, "But I can't say 'yes' until you've asked the— the Princess!" She wheeled about and bravely faced

him, thinking that now he must understand and forgive her.

Tony was merely bewildered. "Ask the Princess?" he echoed, wonderingly.

Marjorie looked at him beseechingly for the length of a pulse beat—and her pulse was beating very rapidly then—and saw that he didn't understand. All that she said was: "Yes!" gazing wistfully at him.

Still he did not understand. So she turned again, slowly mounted the footstool, and solemnly sat in the great throne-chair. She thought she was being very dignified, but she only looked what she was—a dainty, adorable little bit of femininity, nestled in the cavernous depths of a chair much too big for her, with her small feet, in their white satin slippers, peeping out from under the filmy skirt and resting on the footstool. Still, princesses do look like that sometimes.

She spread out her skirts with pathetic prettiness, held out one of her little hands to Tony, and besought him with a wealth of love in her voice, and a timorous accent: "Please, ask the Princess!"

He stared at her unbelievably for an instant. Then understanding smote him. He recoiled, as though a princess—or a queen—had struck him with her sceptre. It was in a subdued voice, breathless with cha-







*"Please, Ask--the Princess"*

grin and disappointment, that he asked, slowly, pausing between each word:

"You—you—are—the—Princess?"

Still holding out her hands to him pleadingly, she answered, tearfully, self-accusingly:

"Yes! Yes! I've deceived you! I'm the Princess! I'm horribly rich—and my father won't disinherit me!" The last came out with a gasp. He should know all the truth!

There could be no doubt that he was desperately hurt. It seemed to him that again his castle, that he had built for their dear occupancy, had crumbled. He looked at Marjorie, overwhelmed, speechless, shocked, bewildered. At last he spoke, and the tone of his voice told her how deeply he was hurt:

"You—you haven't played fair!" he began. There was bitterness, too, in his words, but his tone softened again as he saw the pain in her eyes. "You've been so—so kind—so generous—so adorable! I couldn't help loving you—and now I shan't be able to stop." He turned a step away from her, unsteadily.

"You musn't stop!" she besought him. "Please go on loving me!" He took another step away from her and toward the door. She held him back with: "Listen to me, Tony, dear. You're *my prince* and I love you too well to spoil your dream. If you

don't want my money, I'll give it away. But you must take *me*—take me away to your clean little cottage—I'll keep it for my Cinderella-man in his own way—for it's my way, too!"

Moving as was this last appeal, Tony did not heed it. Utterly bewildered, shaken, scarcely knowing what he was doing, only with an instinct that he must go away and never see her again, he started toward the door, failing to catch, even for an instant, that compelling, loving, heart-broken look that she sent after him.

She felt then that she had lost him. With a sob she wilted in the throne-chair, a little heap of fluffy white, her face buried in her arms.

The sound of that sob gave Tony pause, even at the threshold. He turned, and it came over him that he was doing a terrible thing. What he should do was not clear to him. Emotions, conflicting with deep-seated principles, were having it out in heart and brain, as he slowly came back to the throne-chair. There he stood for an atom of time, looking down at her, his eyes fastened upon a wisp of her hair where it curled upon her neck and snuggled up lovingly under the lobe of a rose-pink ear.

A sudden and irresistible longing for her possessed him. Breathlessly he leaned forward and touched



her shoulder with his hand. Slowly she raised her head and glanced up at him in wonderment. What she saw in his face was only the same look that lovers have given each other for centuries, but this look was for her. She smiled her great happiness up to him through her tears, and lifted her fresh sweet face to him. He caught her, with a glad cry, up into his arms and held her tightly, fearing that she was a fairy princess indeed and might still escape him.

He said something to that effect, but she reassured him with a kiss—which is the best and the only way to silence a lover's doubting.

If it matters very much to you, gentle reader, I will tell you that they did go to live in that little cottage, with Primrose for "footman," most happily; that "The Gateway of Dreams" was produced and made Tony so rich and so famous that the little Quintards just had to move into a smart apartment, with a southern exposure, away up high—the ninth story, I think—where they kept boxes of geraniums on the window-sills, canaries in cages and gold-fishes in jars, not to mention the puppies even after they had grown up. And once a week, regularly as clockwork, came Morris Caner and Romney and Doctor Thayer and that ministering angel Sewall, to dinner while Primrose, looking as proud as a traffic policeman—but

more amiable—went about in a state of perpetual bliss, serving the oysers cold and the soup hot, in that heavenly place where he was head usher.

THE END.





